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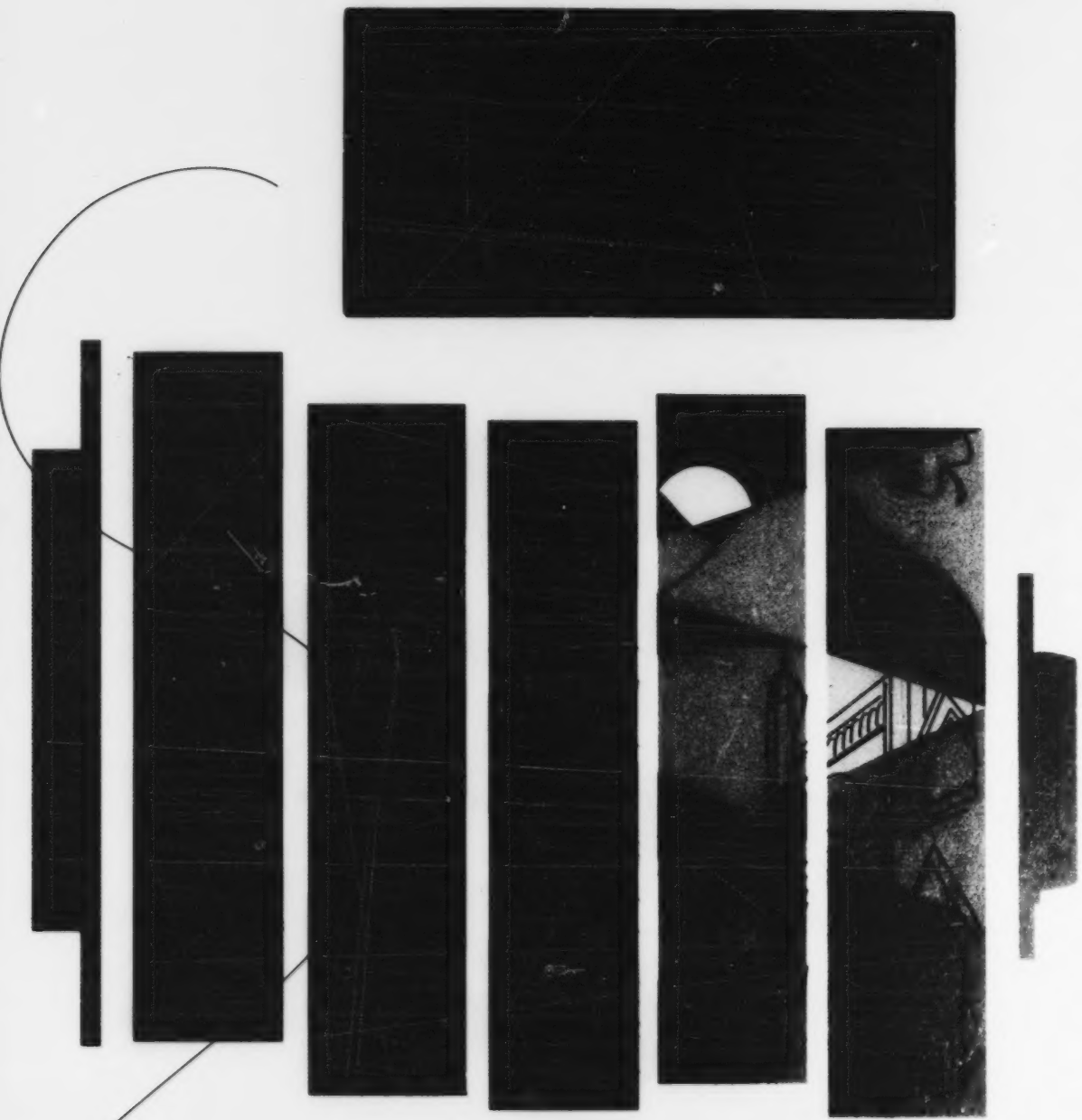

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103-00802/

Research Report

Results of an Evaluation of the Peer Support Program at Nova Institution for Women

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2000 N° R-87

Results of an Evaluation of the Peer Support Program at Nova Institution for Women

by

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May 2000

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to Dr. Sylvia Frausin-Murphy, psychologist at Nova Institution, as well as Margot Watt (psychology intern) for their support and cooperation in the collection of data for this study. Their commitment to the women of this institution was apparent from the beginning. Appreciation is also extended to Fariya Syed, whose experience with this project proved invaluable in the distribution of measures and collection of data, particularly the individual interviews conducted with the staff and offenders. We also wish to acknowledge the work of Cherami Wichmann, who assisted with statistical analyses and editing of the paper. Thanks also to Ralph Serin for his editorial comments regarding this report. Finally, we thank the staff and offenders at Nova Institution. Without their participation and cooperation in completing numerous questionnaires, surveys, and interviews, the evaluation of this program would not have been possible.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides results of a preliminary evaluation of the Peer Support Team (PST) program at Nova Institution for Women. In brief, the PST program consists of intensive training for women inmates to provide emotional support to their peers. Graduates of PST training become 'pseudo-counselors' and are sanctioned to provide support services to other inmates upon request.

The assessment of this program incorporated both quantitative and qualitative analyses in a multimethod research design. Results of the evaluation showed a lack of use of the peer support services at Nova Institution. The women provided three main reasons for not using peer support: 1) they were not aware of the program, 2) concern that the PST member would breach confidentiality, and 3) no personal need for formal peer support services. Notably, many women suggested that they *would* use peer support in the future if they felt that they needed it and if they could speak to a team member that they trusted. Moreover, concerns regarding confidentiality were related to a perceived *potential* breach of trust, rather than the result of *actual* negative experiences.

A clear understanding about the program was lacking in several areas. While most staff and inmates were cognizant that the PST was operational at Nova, there was a general lack of awareness regarding specific program details. For example, a number of inmates reported that they had heard about the PST program, but were unaware that they could request support services from program graduates. In addition, there was confusion amongst staff members regarding the identities of PST members and the process involved in setting up peer support sessions.

Some concerns were also noted regarding the availability of funding for the program. There were no monetary resources allocated to the PST at Nova at the time of the evaluation. In addition, difficulties were anticipated regarding the availability of staff to coordinate the PST in the future, as one of the coordinators was leaving Nova soon after the evaluation was conducted.

Notwithstanding the above-noted concerns, the data also showed some very positive gains as a result of the PST program. Most markedly, those women who had participated in the peer support training experienced numerous personal benefits. These included: developing skills to deal with their own as well as other offenders' issues, gaining a better understanding of themselves, practical knowledge / education, and acquiring possible career-related experience.

At the time of data collection for this evaluation, the PST was evolving steadily at Nova Institution. Despite some implementation problems, many respondents (staff *and* inmates) reported generally positive perceptions of the program. Difficulties with the PST were mostly related to the poor awareness and lack of use. This evaluation report concludes with some concrete recommendations for potential program improvement.

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INTRODUCTION

The fact that women comprise less than 3% of incarcerated offenders in Canada (Solicitor General Canada, 1997), may explain why little attention has been focused on the development and evaluation of programs for women offenders until recently. The development of programs designed specifically for women is particularly important given the fact that women offenders may have different needs than men, based on their unique experiences (see Koons, Burrow, Morash, & Bynum, 1997; Shaw, 1994 for reviews). For example, in contrast to men, women offenders often report histories of prior sexual or physical abuse, mental health problems, alcohol or drug abuse, and prolonged periods of unemployment related to limited education and few marketable skills. Many of these women also report that they are the primary caregivers of their children. Finally, women may tend to turn their anger and stress inward, resulting in a high incidence of self-injurious and self-destructive behaviors among the female offender population.

One additional factor that may differentiate federally sentenced women from men is the importance they place on relationships. Just as friendships may be particularly important to non-incarcerated women, it has been suggested that women prisoners have an overwhelming need to establish friendships or affectional relationships with other offenders (Giallombardo, 1966; 1974). In fact, (Heney, 1990) indicated that many women offenders spontaneously created a support network for each other in times of need.

Furthermore, relational issues, such as obtaining support from one's peers and forming close "sister-like" relationships, have been perceived to contribute to the success of institutional programs (Koons et al., 1997). According to Koons and colleagues, these findings elucidate an additional important difference between male and female offenders. Specifically, they report that, "Prior research, almost exclusively in men's prisons (Andrews, Zinger et al., 1990), has cautioned against the use of groups in programming because creating open communication among offenders can reinforce procriminal behaviour and attitudes; however, women's

propensity to form close and helpful relationships with each other results in prosocial, ex-offenders' support groups both during the program and after completion" (Koons, et al., 1997, p. 529).

The relative importance of relationships to women suggests that programs incorporating peer support and fostering meaningful, caring relationships among inmates may be particularly effective for federally sentenced women. Thus, a program designed specifically to address these issues was designed at Prison for Women (P4W) in 1990. The Peer Support Team (PST) program was designed to provide offenders with, "proficient crisis intervention and short-term counseling delivered by their peers" (Correctional Services of Canada, 1996a, p. 2).

Participants who volunteer for this program initially must go through a screening process to determine their suitability for the role of a peer support provider. Individuals who meet the criteria for inclusion receive training in counseling and issues relevant to women offenders (e.g., substance abuse, self-injury, and eating disorders). Following the completion of training, participants' progress is evaluated. Those who graduate from the program are then eligible to become "PST members", and are sanctioned to provide support services to other inmates upon request.

Results of an evaluation of the PST program at P4W revealed benefits to both recipients of counseling services as well as team members themselves (Pollack, 1994). Overall, those who received peer support reported that it helped them to feel better about themselves, and reduced feelings of isolation and depression. Moreover, team members stated that they benefited personally from the training; "...the training session offered an atmosphere of trust, mutuality and respect and encouraged the participant's sense of autonomy and self-efficacy" (Pollack, 1994, p.37). PST members also reported increased feelings of self-worth resulting from the fact that staff trusted them with the responsibility of counseling other inmates.

Soon after the inception of the PST program at P4W, services at this institution were amended and decentralized. Following the report *Creating Choices* (Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women, 1990), the Solicitor General of Canada announced the decision to construct five new facilities for women. In addition to a Healing Lodge for aboriginal women in Saskatchewan, four additional facilities were opened in Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, and Nova Scotia. Based on the success of the PST program initially established at P4W, the decision was made to implement this program at four of the new institutions.[1] The purpose of the present report was to evaluate the PST program at one of these facilities: Nova Institution in Truro, Nova Scotia.[2]

This report will be organized in the following manner.First, a brief description of the evaluation framework, including measures, procedures, and a description of the population of inmates and staff at Nova Institution is presented. Second, both quantitative and qualitative findings of the study are described. Finally, limitations of the study are discussed and recommendations for potential improvement of the PST program are suggested.

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1 No formal PST program has been implemented at the fifth facility, the Healing Lodge in Saskatchewan, since peer support is encouraged by the entire structure and organization of the facility.

2 At the present time, an initial evaluation of the PST program at Edmonton Institution for Women (Alberta) has been completed.

METHOD

Evaluation Framework

Evaluation of the PST program at Nova Institution was modeled on the Evaluation Framework suggested by Eljdupovic-Guzina and Blanchette (1997). The development of this framework was developed based on: 1) a review of relevant literature; 2) consultation with advisors from the Women Offender Sector and the Research Branch (National Headquarters, Correctional Service of Canada); and 3) phone interviews with staff and former staff from P4W and the regional women's facilities.

The framework allows for three different levels of assessment, differing in scope and depth: comprehensive, moderate, and basic. The comprehensive evaluation option was employed in the present study since it provided the most in-depth and detailed assessment available. Each aspect of the program was evaluated using a variety of suggested methods, including surveys, face-to-face interviews, and self-report questionnaires (i.e., Rosenberg's Self-esteem Scale, Sociometric tests, Correctional Environment Status Inventory). In addition, individual interviews were conducted to assess personal feelings and perceptions of both staff and offenders regarding the program.

Instruments

Rosenberg's Self-esteem Scale

This self-esteem measure is designed to assess individuals' overall feelings of self-worth (Rosenberg, 1965; see Appendix A). The scale consists of 10-items, each of which are to be rated on a four-point likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree). Scores on this test reflect perceptions of global self-esteem, which may predict behaviour across a wide range of situations (O'Brien, 1985).

Sociometric Tests

Sociometric tests (Northway & Weld, 1957) provide a wealth of information regarding individual characteristics as well as group interactions. In the present investigation, offenders were asked to indicate their first, second, and third choice in response to the question, "Who do you go to for moral support?" (see Appendix B). Findings were presented graphically, in the form of a sociogram. This procedure provided information regarding the popularity of specific individuals (e.g., PST Members) as well as a visual representation of the interconnections and relationships between offenders, PST members, and staff.

The Correctional Environment Status Inventory

The Correctional Environment Status Inventory (CESI; Wolfus & Stasiak, 1996) measures inmates' perceptions regarding the quality of their correctional environment (see Appendix C). Respondents were asked to rate 66 items on a five-point likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). These items were subsumed under 6 scales and 10 (*subscales*):

1) Staff Cohesion;
2) Staff Involvement (*responsive, caring, disinterested*);
3) Staff Treatment Focus (*encouragement, open communication*);
4) Clarity and Organization;
5) Offender Relationships (*mutual caring, peer support, hostility*); and
6) Offender Treatment Orientation (*problem solving, change orientation*).

See Appendix D for a list of the items that comprise each of the scales and subscales. Internal consistency of this scale (based on a sample of male offenders) ranged from $\alpha = .59$ to .87.

Staff / Offender Surveys

These surveys consisted of both open and closed, short-answer and rating-scale questions designed to assess offenders' awareness and perceptions of the PST Program (Eljdupovic-Guzina & Blanchette, 1997; Appendix E).

Staff / Offender Interviews

Of primary importance in the evaluation of this program were results obtained from individual interviews conducted with both staff and offenders. Detailed guidelines for these interviews were developed as part of an evaluation framework for the PST program (Eljdupovic-Guzina & Blanchette, 1997; Appendix F). The format of these interviews was very flexible allowing interviewees' responses to determine the nature and direction of the discussion. Semi-structured interviews were designed to facilitate the involvement of stakeholders in the evaluation of their program, providing them with an opportunity to express their own views, feelings, and ideas about PST without imposing a pre-determined form to their responses.

Procedure

Data for this evaluation was obtained through collaboration with the staff psychologist, who was also one of the two joint co-ordinators of the PST program at Nova.

Pre-Program Questionnaires

The first set of measures (Rosenberg self-esteem scale, CESI, Sociometric test) was sent to the co-ordinator at Nova in October of 1998. Questionnaires were distributed to all offenders who were willing to participate and were returned to the researchers as of January 1999. These initial measures were completed during the time that the first group of PST members was being trained.[3]

[3] Training for the first group of PST members began in October of 1998, and was completed by February, 1999. Thus, although training had begun at the time of pre-program data collection, PST counseling was not yet being offered to the inmate population.

Post-Program Questionnaires

The post-program questionnaires were sent to Nova staff in early April 1999. At this time, the first group of PST members had graduated and a second group was being trained for potential graduation in June or July. All inmates interested in participating were asked to complete the Rosenberg self-esteem scale, the CESI, and the Sociometric test[4], as well as a survey designed to assess their awareness of the PST program. Interested staff members were asked to complete a similar survey.

By the end of May, only seven individuals (2 staff and 5 inmates) had completed these measures and returned them to the staff psychologist. Therefore, a second attempt was made to distribute the questionnaires when the researchers went to Nova in early June to conduct interviews.

Post-Program Interviews

At the end of each survey is a question asking respondents if they would consent to an interview to discuss their perceptions of the PST program. Of the seven who initially responded to the surveys, only four (one staff member and three inmates) agreed to participate in a face-to-face interview. However, the institutional psychologists and the researchers themselves later recruited many individuals to participate in the interviews during the first week of June.

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[4] For both pre- and post-program data collection, all measures were administered together with the exception of the sociometric questionnaire. This was due to the fact that questionnaires and surveys were anonymous, whereas the sociometric test required the identification of participants.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in a private room at the institution. All participants were informed that their participation was completely voluntary and that confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained. In addition, offenders were asked to sign informed consent forms prior to participating in their interviews.

Participants

All offenders who participated in this study were serving federal sentences (two or more years), and were classified as either minimum or medium security.

There was some variation in the number of participants who completed each measure. A number of individuals returned surveys and questionnaires, in addition to participating in individual interviews. Others consented only to the interviews, but did not complete the questionnaires, or vice versa. Additionally some participants completed some of the questionnaires, but not others (e.g., completed the Rosenberg and CESI, but not the sociometric test).

Numbers also varied for pre- versus post-program data collection. Moreover, since most questionnaires (with the exception of the sociometric test) were anonymous, it is not known whether the offenders who responded to the pre-program measures were the same individuals who completed the post-program questionnaires. The following is a summary of the number of staff and offenders who responded to each measure for both pre- and post-program data collection.

Pre-Program Implementation

In January of 1999, 14 offenders responded to each of the pre-program measures: the Rosenberg self-esteem scale, the CESI, and the Sociometric test. At this time, the offender population size ranged from about 21-28, and 3

individuals were participating in the first PST training session which was to be completed in February.

Post-Program Implementation

During the first week of June 1999, post-program data was collected. Total number of offenders who completed each of these measures was as follows: Rosenberg self-esteem (11); CESI (10); sociometric test (11). In addition, 10 offenders[5] and 11 staff members responded to the survey. At this time, there were approximately 32 offenders housed at Nova Institution, including one PST member and 3 offenders in PST-training.

Although only 4 individuals who originally returned their surveys indicated that they would like to participate in face-to-face interviews, additional participants were recruited when the researchers visited Nova in June. A total of 18 offender interviews were conducted, including; 1 team member, 3 members who were in training, 1 member who did not complete the PST training (due to scheduling difficulties with other programs), and 13 others (neither recipients of the service nor PST members). Unfortunately, we were unable to conduct any interviews with offenders who had been recipients of peer support.

Staff interviews were conducted with: the two psychologists/co-ordinators of the PST program (combined interview), warden, nurse, unit manager, unit assistant-operations, case management officer, teacher, program co-ordinator, 2 program facilitators, 2 maintenance staff, 2 reintegration operation supervisors, and 7 primary workers. Thus, a total of 22 staff members participated in semi-structured interviews (17 females and 5 males).

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[5] Eleven inmates originally responded to the offender survey. However, one of the participants responded with seemingly contradictory and confusing information for different questions, indicating that she did not comprehend the questions being asked. This survey was therefore excluded from analyses.

RESULTS

Rosenberg's Self-esteem Scale

Fourteen inmates completed this measure prior to the start of the PST program, and 11 self-esteem measures were returned post-program implementation. No information was available regarding the characteristics of the pre-program respondents. However, the post-program self-esteem scale was appended to the offender survey. Thus, we were able to determine that 2 of the 11 post-program respondents were in training to become PST members, 1 had been a recipient of PST services, and the remaining 8 were non-recipients.

In order to create a total score for the measure, half of the items were reverse-scored and then a mean score was calculated for all 10 items. Thus, lower total scores were reflective of higher self-esteem. An independent samples t-test was then performed to examine differences in self-esteem of pre- versus post-program respondents. Results of this test were not significant, ($\underline{M}_{pre}$ = 2.03, $\underline{M}_{post}$ = 2.01), $\underline{t}$ (23) = .09, ns.

These findings indicate an overall lack of difference between self-esteem of offenders prior to program implementation and self-esteem of offenders following implementation of the PST program. However, it is important to mention several factors. First, these results are based on only a small percentage of the total population (i.e., 56% pre-program, 34% post-program).

Second, no information is available regarding the actual individuals who completed pre- and post-program questionnaires. In fact, it is possible that the individuals who completed the post-test were not the same individuals who responded to the pre-test. Thus, this analysis did not directly test change in the same individuals from pre- to post-program implementation. Rather, this t-test examines differences in one group of individuals before the program was implemented and a different group of individuals after the program had begun.

Thus, at best, it can be said that the self-esteem of the individuals who responded after the PST program had been implemented did not differ significantly from the group of individuals who responded pre-program implementation.

Finally, results of an evaluation of the PST program at Edmonton Institution indicated that PST members reported higher self-esteem than non-PST members (Blanchette & Eljdupovic-Guzina, 1998). In the present study, only 2 PST-members in training responded to the post self-esteem measure. Thus, PST members and non-members were grouped together to examine differences from pre- to post-program implementation. This procedure may have obscured potential differences from pre- to post-self-esteem for different groups (i.e., increase in the self-esteem of PST members, but not non-members, following inception of the PST program). Thus, the researchers suggest that changes in self-esteem before and after implementation of the PST program be examined separately for PST members and non-members in future studies of this kind, sample size permitting.

Sociometric Test

Pre-Program Implementation. Fourteen offenders, approximately 56% of the population, responded to the pre-program sociometric test. Three of these offenders reported either that they did not obtain support from any specific individuals at the institution, or that they preferred to seek social support from family members. Since the main goal of the present study was to identify relationships among inmates at Nova, these three offenders were not included in the sociogram. Moreover, one of the offenders who was participating in PST training at the time, also indicated that she did not seek support from her peers. However, since it was deemed important to examine the peer relationships of all future team members in this pictorial representation, her responses were included in the descriptive analysis.

The pre-program sociogram (Figure 1) provides a pictorial representation of the relationships among 11 offenders and the individuals (inmate or staff) who they listed as first, second, or third choices for moral support. All individuals who participated in either the first or second PST-training sessions responded to this measure and are referred to in the sociogram as "future team members".

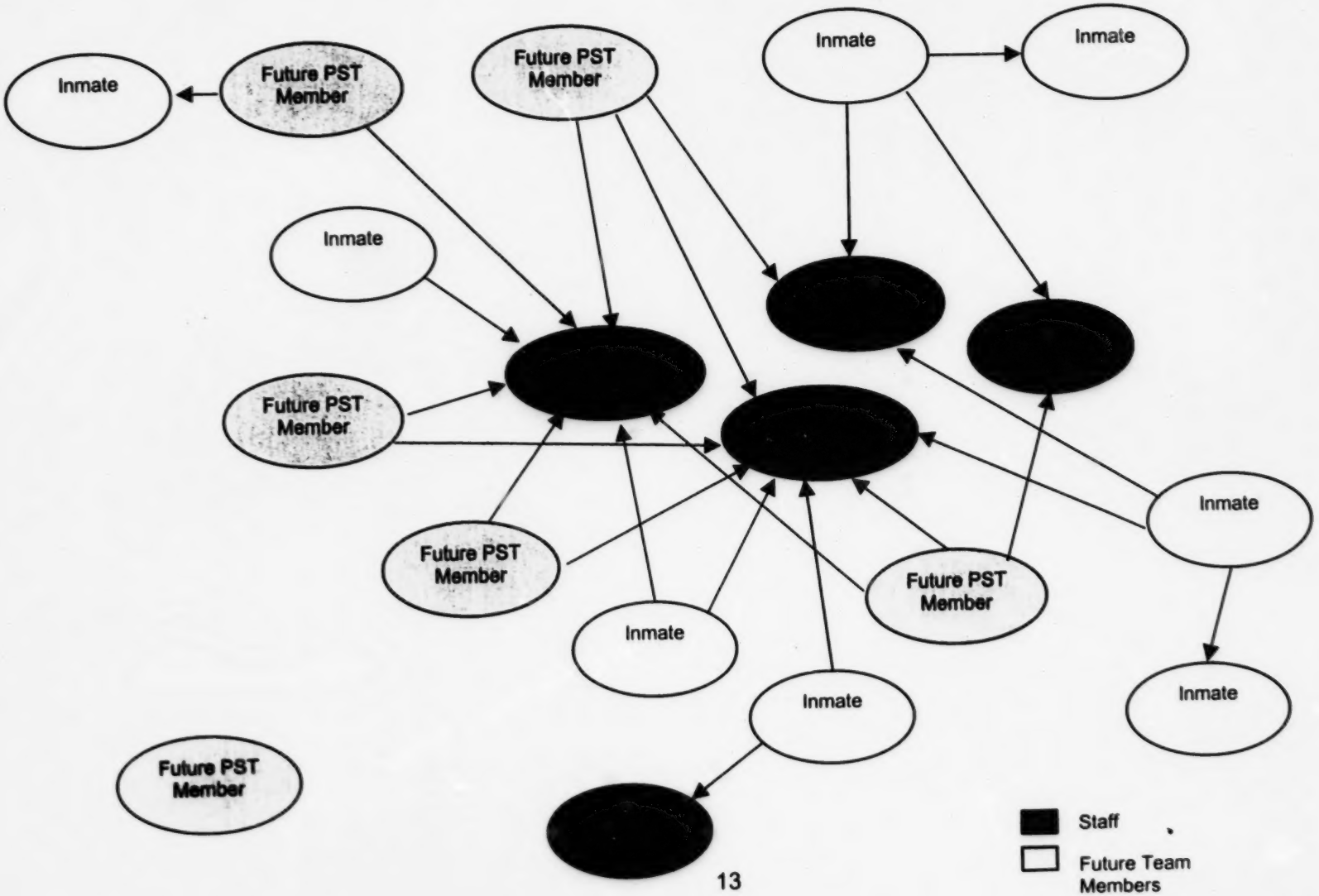
An examination of this sociogram indicates that only three of the respondents reported turning to other inmates for moral support. Although the purpose of the sociometric test was to investigate relationships among inmates themselves, it is interesting to note that all offenders who responded listed one or more staff members as sources of moral support. This may be a function of the "community living" model reinforced in the new regional facilities, in which staff are expected to provide a supportive rather than a punitive role.

It is also important to consider the role of future PST members in the offender population prior to their initiation into the role of support-providers. An examination of the sociogram indicates that most future team members are willing to enlist support services from staff members and one future member also lists a fellow inmate as a source of support (see top left-hand corner of Figure 1). One of the future members, however, reported that she did not seek support from anyone (see bottom left-hand corner). This may be reflective of a general lack of need for support, or alternatively, a lack of ability or confidence in asking for support when it is needed.

Finally, none of the inmates who responded to the sociometric test indicated that they would contact a future team member for moral support. Although individuals identified as future team members were not yet active in their role as support-providers, this does not mean that they can not provide informal support to fellow-inmates and friends should they ask for it. Results of the sociogram, however, do not seem to indicate that offenders who responded to these measures perceive these individuals to be sources of social support. Thus, these individuals may experience a significant change in their role within the inmate group following their graduation from PST training.

Figure 1

PRE-PROGRAM SOCIOGRAM FOR PST (NOVA)



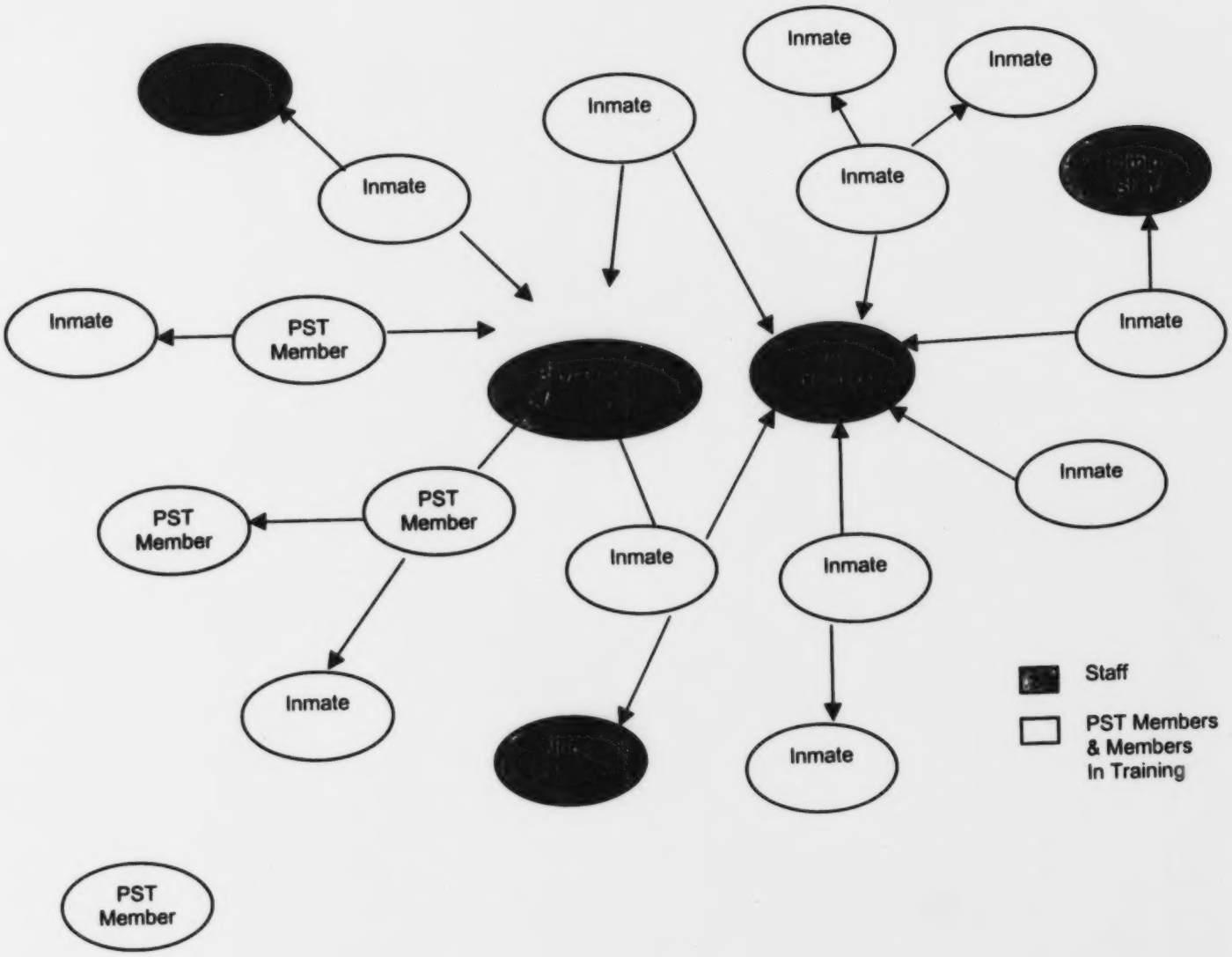
Post-Program Implementation. Approximately 30% of the population at Nova (11 inmates) responded to the post-program sociometric test. Again, two offenders listed family members, as opposed to specific inmates at the institution, as sources of moral support. Thus, only the remaining 9 offenders, their self-identified sources of support, and PST team members or team members receiving training were included in the post-program sociogram (Figure 2).

In this sociogram, the team member who had graduated from the first training session was not distinguished from the individuals who were still PST-trainees (second training session) at the time of post-program data collection. It would probably have been beneficial to differentiate between these two different groups ("graduated" and "in-training"), since team members who had graduated were able to provide formal counseling services whereas team members in training were not. However, at the time of post-program intervention, there was only one graduated PST member remaining at Nova (the other two graduated members had been released). Thus the two groups of PST members were combined in order to preserve the anonymity of the one PST member who had graduated from the program.

Results of the sociogram (Figure 2) indicated that 4 of the respondents reported seeking other inmates when in need of moral support. Similar to the pre-program sociogram (Figure 1), all offenders listed at least one staff member as a source of support. Only one of the respondents listed a PST member as a source of moral support. This is perhaps not surprising, since only one of these members had actually graduated and was available to provide official peer support services at the time. The other three individuals were still in training and were not recognized as official PST members.

Figure 2

POST-PROGRAM SOCIOGRAM FOR PST (NOVA)



Interestingly, the one inmate who did select a PST member as a source of support was a PST member herself. This suggests not only that this offender is able to recognize the need for support herself, but also that she is able to obtain this support from a fellow PST member. This finding appears to be indicative of a good working relationship and a certain amount of trust among the individuals who work together as team members.

Summary

Overall, there seemed to be a general tendency for inmates to seek more support from other inmates post-program in comparison to pre-program implementation. This was reflected in the fact that 21% of the respondents listed another inmate as a source of moral support in the pre-test versus 36% of respondents in the post-test. However, this is not a large difference. Furthermore, it is difficult to make direct comparisons between the two sociograms, since different inmates responded to the two sociometric tests. In fact, only two of the offenders who responded to the pre-program sociogram also responded to the post-program sociogram. Therefore, any differences between the two sociograms may be more representative of the characteristics of the respondents, rather than actual changes in the support-seeking behaviors of the inmates.

Results from the post-program sociogram indicate that only one of the respondents perceived a PST member to be a source of moral support. However, only 34% of the population responded to the post-program sociogram. Thus, it is still possible that other inmates, who did not respond to this measure, do seek out PST members in times of need. Second there was only one individual who had graduated from the program and was officially able to provide PST serviced at the time of the post-program data collection. It is possible that this individual may feel somewhat overwhelmed at being the only PST member available, or alternatively that some offenders do not feel particularly comfortable talking with this one individual. Problems associated with having only one PST member to

provide counseling services may be alleviated should the three members in training at the time of this evaluation graduate from the program and begin to share the counseling duties.

Correctional Environment Status Inventory

Fourteen offenders responded to the pre-program CESI and 10 to the post-program CESI. Characteristics of participants were somewhat similar to those who completed the Rosenberg self-esteem measure. No information was available for pre-test respondents, but post-test respondents included: 2 PST members in training, 1 PST recipient, and 7 non-members.

Items were re-scored so those higher scores were indicative of more positive perceptions of the correctional environment. Also, several subscales were renamed to better reflect this fact. Specifically , "hostility" was renamed "absence of hostility" and "disinterested" was termed "interested". In order to create total scores for scales and subscales, mean scores were calculated by summing the items for each particular scale, and then dividing by the number of items involved.

Although 10 offenders responded to the post CESI, many of them left some items blank. In calculating average scores for the scales/subscales, respondents were excluded from the analysis if they were missing more than 10% of the data for that particular scale/subscale. This resulted in a reduced sample for some of the scales (see Table 1).

A series of 16 t-tests were conducted to examine differences in perceptions of the correctional environment of individuals who responded pre-program implementation versus the perceptions of those who responded post-program implementation (see Table 1). There was a trend toward a significant difference

between groups for the subscale of peer support.[6] An examination of the means indicated that inmates who responded to this questionnaire prior to PST program implementation reported higher perceptions of supportive peer relationships than did offenders who responded following program implementation.

Table 1: Means (Standard Deviations) and t-tests for CESI Scale and Subscale Scores by Group

Scale / Subscale	Mean (SD) Pre-Program Group (n = 14)	Mean (SD) Post-Program Group (n = 10)	df	T
Staff Involvement	3.03 (.87)	3.41 (.87)[a]	21.0	-1.02
Responsive	2.91 (.89)	3.20 (.94)[a]	21.0	-0.75
Caring	2.98 (.97)	3.53 (.82)	22.0	-1.46
Interested	3.23 (.96)	3.54 (1.02)	22.0	-0.76
Staff Treatment Focus	3.28 (.97)	3.52 (.74)[a]	21.0	-0.63
Encouragement	3.32 (1.02)	3.89 (.77)	22.0	-1.49
Open Communication	3.23 (1.06)	3.03 (.77)[a]	21.0	0.48
Staff Cohesion	3.64 (.72)	3.85 (.61)[a]	21.0	-0.73
Clarity & Organization	3.53 (.66)	3.44 (.66)	22.0	0.32
Offender Treatment Orientation	3.94 (.63)	4.22 (.29)	19.2	-1.48
Problem Solving	4.22 (.93)	4.70 (.36)	17.8	-1.76
Change Orientation	3.65 (.49)	3.74 (.47)	22.0	-0.43
Offender Relationships	3.34 (.54)	2.95 (.41)	22.0	1.93
Mutual Caring	3.47 (.70)	3.08 (.54)	22.0	1.49
Peer Support	3.25 (.61)	2.67 (.44)	22.0	2.57*
Absence of Hostility	3.15 (.61)	3.03 (.43)	22.0	0.54

[a]Means and standard deviations for these scales were based on a sample size of 9 for the post-treatment group.

*$p < .05$

[6] Group differences for the peer support subscale were significant at $p = .02$. Due to the large number of t-tests performed and the possibility of Type I errors, it was deemed appropriate to examine findings significant at only $p < .01$. However, the small sample size likely also reduced the power of the statistical tests performed. Thus, results for this subscale are discussed as a trend in the data.

This finding was surprising, since one would expect that perceptions of peer support might be more positive after the PST program began functioning at the institution. There are several possible reasons for this unexpected discovery. Similar to the analyses conducted with the self-esteem measure, there is little information available regarding the characteristics of individuals who responded to the post-test and no information regarding the identities of those who responded to the pre-test. Results of the sociometric test, however, in which offenders were required to reveal their identities indicated that only 2 individuals responded to both the pre- and post-sociometric test. Based on these findings we might assume a similar rate of response for the CESI, indicating that the sample responding to the pre-CESI was almost entirely different from the sample that responded post-CESI. Thus, it may simply be that offenders, who responded pre-program implementation had more positive perceptions of peer support at Nova than those who responded to the post-CESI, independent of any impact PST might have had on the environment.

Second, with the implementation of the PST program, more offenders may now be dealing with their problems sooner or more effectively, by speaking to a PST member. This may have resulted in a reduction in the number or severity of issues which might have arisen (e.g., conflicts with other inmates), thereby lessening the need for other inmates to provide peer support. Based on this reduction in need for supportive behaviors, inmates may have reported less positive perceptions of peer support in the environment at Nova.

Finally, a lower mean difference in perceptions of peer support may not be a result of PST implementation, but of some other factor entirely. In a prison environment, there are many variables that may be influencing the atmosphere in general. For example, at the time of post-program data collection a number of staff members commented on the over-population at Nova; many of the offenders were forced to share rooms and space was limited. Staff also commented that June was a very hot month. Thus, the heat, in combination with the close quarters often caused tension among offenders. Factors such as these would be

more likely to affect relationships among offenders (i.e., level of peer support) rather than other aspects of the environment assessed by the CESI (e.g., relationship between staff and inmates). Thus, this explanation would also be consistent with the results of the CESI reported previously.

Offender Surveys

Of the 10 offenders who responded to the survey, 2 were participating in PST training at the time, 1 was a recipient of PST services, and the remaining 7 were non-recipients. These individuals ranged in age from 20 to 43, with an average age of 34. Two were serving life sentences; the remaining 8 were serving sentences ranging from 2 to 5 years, with an average sentence length of 2 ½ years. Although the average length of incarceration was 13 months (range = 2 months to 4 years), the average amount of time served at Nova Institution was only 5 months (range = 1 month to 1 ½ years).

Offenders who were unaware of the PST Program. Results indicated that 2 of the 10 women were unaware of the existence of the PST program at Nova Institution. An examination of their surveys, however, indicated that they had only been at Nova for 1 month. Thus, the relatively short period of time at the institution may have been a factor in their lack of knowledge about the program. This suggests that it may be necessary for PST members and other offenders to be more proactive in disseminating information to new arrivals during induction. Notably, one of the individuals who were unaware of the program indicated that it would have nice to have some sort of orientation in which information regarding the PST program was provided.

Interestingly, both of the offenders who reported no knowledge of the PST program also reported that they knew how to submit a request for counseling. It is possible that this question was misleading since it simply states, " Do you know how to submit a request for counseling?" not "Do you know how to submit a request for PST counseling?" Thus, it is possible that these individuals interpreted the question as referring to psychological, rather than PST counseling.

In addition, one of these women reported that they did not know about PST, yet later reported that they knew who the team members were, and listed them. This finding, although seemingly contradictory, may possibly be explained if one examines some of the comments made during individual interviews with the researchers (discussed later in the paper). During these interviews, a number of offenders, stated that they knew a peer support program existed and that they knew some or all of the individuals who participated in training. However, when questioned further, they seemed to perceive "peer support" to be another program like "cognitive skills" or substance abuse", in which offenders who participated were receiving aid for their own needs. They seemed unaware that offenders who participated in the training and graduated, were then available to provide support services to other inmates.

Given this information, the survey question assessing awareness, although presented as a single question, actually seems to have two parts to it; "Were you aware of the PST program and the possibility to receive support and counseling from your peers (PST member)?" Therefore, the offender who responded to this particular survey may have heard of the PST program and know which offenders participated in the training, yet been unaware of the possibility of receiving peer support from the graduates.

Offenders who were aware of the PST Program. Eight of the 10 respondents indicated that they were aware of the PST program. When asked how they had learned about the program, the majority (n = 7) reported that another inmate had told them about it; 2 also indicated that a PST member had informed them; and one offender reported that she had learned about the program during her incarceration at P4W.[7] None of these individuals reported that they had seen notices or posters relaying information about the PST program, perhaps indicating a lack of visual displays promoting PST services. This may be an important additional means of communicating information, particularly since 2 of

[7] Several offenders listed more than one method of discovery; therefore total number of responses are greater than 8.

the inmates who had only been at Nova for one month were unaware of the program. Posted notices might be a more effective way of disseminating information to new inmates who may not hear about the program through "word-of-mouth", since they will likely have fewer contacts within the offender population.

Only 4 of the 8 offenders who were aware of the program knew who the team members were, and 6 reported that they knew how to submit a request for counseling. None of these individuals reported that they had ever been denied a meeting with a PST member if they had requested it. However, it appears that the response to this question may have been a result more of a *lack of a request for a meeting* as opposed to an actual *denial of a request*, since only one of the survey respondents reported that they had ever *asked* to see a PST member.

As mentioned previously, 2 offenders had never requested PST since they were unaware of the program. An additional 7 offenders reported that they had never asked to see a PST member, providing the following reasons. Most of the offenders ($\underline{n}$ = 5) indicated that they hadn't used PST because they felt that they did not need it. Two reported that they had concerns about confidentially, and only one respondent indicated that she did not feel comfortable speaking to the PST member.

One respondent indicated that she would feel more comfortable asking to see a PST member if there were more or different people on the PST team. She suggested that someone from each informal group or friendship "clique" should be chosen to be a PST member, instead of just having people who are chosen by the psychologists. A second offender remarked that she would feel more comfortable requesting the service if she could just go up and talk to the PST member, rather than proceeding through a more formal process (e.g., approaching staff or PST member and organizing a meeting, etc.)

These results suggest that the majority of respondents did not use PST because they did not experience a personal need for the service. A few concerns were raised, however, regarding the service providers and the process involved (i.e.,

confidentiality, not feeling comfortable with PST members). In addition, one of the PST-trainees mentioned that she did not use PST because she was a PST member herself.

It is unfortunate that this offender did not perceive that a care-provider might also sometimes be in need of support from her peers. One of the sections in the PST training manual deals specifically with the potential need for support and the support systems available to PST members. At the time that the surveys were completed, however, the PST members still participating in training had not yet begun this chapter. Thus, further training and discussion regarding the needs of PST members themselves as training progresses, might provide this individual with information that will lead them to regard help-*seeking* as a legitimate role for PST members.

Offenders were also asked whether they thought that implementation of the PST program had any influence on the general atmosphere at the facility. Of the 3 offenders who responded to this question, only one had perceived a general change in the atmosphere. However, she neglected to mention what type of change had occurred.

Finally, offenders were asked whether they believed that PST services had ever been used for alternative purposes (i.e., to chat, avoid work, etc.). Of the 8 individuals with awareness of the PST program, 3 responded to this question. None of the respondents indicated any misuse of the PST program. Interestingly, one of the offenders who reported *no awareness* of the PST program also responded to this question. This offender reported that she believed PST services had been used inappropriately. When asked to describe how the program had been misused, however, she was unable to provide any examples. Thus, although unaware of any specific instances of misuse (due likely to a lack of knowledge about the program in general), this offender apparently perceived the *potential* for inappropriate use of the PST program. In summary, however, there seems to be little evidence for misuse of the PST program, at least based on the responses of the 4 offenders who answered to this question.

The remaining 11 questions on the survey refer to offenders' perceptions of the counseling experience itself. Since most respondents indicated that they had never used PST services, they were unable to reply to these questions. In fact, only one of the 10 respondents indicated that she had been the recipient of PST counseling. Moreover, this respondent indicated that she had used this service only once. Due to the difficulty in reporting data based on a sample size of one, responses to these questions will not be discussed in the present paper.

Summary.

In summary, results suggest that there was some lack of awareness regarding the program among offenders, particularly those who had only been at Nova for a short time. Moreover, only one of the respondents reported that she had ever used PST services, indicating that PST counseling is not being greatly utilized at present. Reasons stated by most offenders for not using PST, however, were more likely to be based on a lack of need for the service, rather than being due to negative perceptions of the program itself.

Staff Survey

Eleven staff members responded to the staff survey including: the warden, a teacher, 1 Reintegration Operations Supervisor (R.O.S.), 4 primary workers, 1 technical services staff member, and 3 other staff members who did not report their position at the institution. Length of time employed in their current position ranged from 8 months to 4 years, with an average of 2 ½ years ($\underline{n}$ = 8). Respondents had spent an average of 5 years working with women offenders, ranging from 8 months to 24 years ($\underline{n}$ = 8).[8]

Staff members were asked to report one or more ways in which they had learned about the PST program. Most of the respondents reported that the psychologist had told them about the program ($\underline{n}$ = 8). Two staff members indicated that they

[8] Three staff members did not respond to these two questions, "length of time in present position" and "length of time working with women offenders". Thus, means and frequencies for these two questions were based on a sample size of 8.

had learned about the program through other means (i.e., brief mention during a Program Board meeting, as part of a training session on a separate topic).

Interestingly, 2 individuals reported that they had learned about the PST program from the researchers when they arrived at Nova to conduct interviews in June.[9] One of these staff members had also learned about the program through another source (i.e., psychologist, as mentioned above). However, the other staff member reported the researchers as the sole source of information about the program, suggesting that he/she was completely unaware of the program prior to the researchers' arrival at the institution. Further examination of this individual's survey however, indicated that this particular staff member had been at the institution for the shortest amount of time. Thus, length of employment may have been a factor in this individual's lack of awareness regarding the PST program.

Similar to the findings of the inmate survey, none of the respondents reported a visual display of information (i.e., brochures, posted notices). This method of disseminating information about the program may be particularly relevant for new staff (as well as new inmates), since these individuals may be less likely to hear about the program by "word-of-mouth" or general information meetings held before their arrival at the institution.

The majority of staff respondents reported that they knew who the team members were (n = 8 of 11). When asked to specifically name the PST members, however, responses varied. Seven of the 8 knew the name of the one team member who had graduated. Many of these individuals (n = 6 of 8) were also able to list some, if not all, of the team members who were participating in the second training session at the time.

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[9] The design of the study called for the completion of surveys before individual interviews were conducted. However, due to the fact that few surveys had been returned, the researchers attempted to distribute additional questionnaires when they arrived at the institution to conduct interviews. As a result, some individuals completed and returned their surveys after they had participated in the interview. Therefore, some of the data regarding awareness of the program based on survey responses may be somewhat inflated, due to the fact that some of these issues were also discussed in the interviews.

Just over half of the respondents (n = 6) knew how to proceed if an inmate was to request peer counseling. Again specific procedures for doing so varied somewhat. Some individuals suggested contacting the PST members directly, whereas others were in favor of contacting the R.O.S. first. Only one of these responses might have caused some difficulty, since one of the staff members indicated that she would contact one of the PST members who was still in training. Only PST members who have graduated from the program are able to provide formal PST counseling services; members who are in training must first complete the training session and then be approved for graduation before they can provide PST services.

In addition, one of the respondents reported that the procedure following a request for peer counseling was to, "direct to a team member". However, this individual did not know who the team members were. Thus, although this staff member was aware of the procedure in the abstract, he/she would likely be unable to perform the actual referral due to a lack of knowledge regarding the identities of the team members.

Seven staff members responded to the next 2 questions referring to the effectiveness of the PST in crisis intervention. *Possible* responses ranged from 1 (not helpful at all) to 10 (very helpful). In terms of the effectiveness of the PST program in providing aid to individual inmates in crisis, responses ranged from 1 through 8, with a mean effectiveness rating of 5 (somewhat helpful). Responses regarding the effectiveness of PST in preventing or assisting in institutional crisis showed the same range (1 to 8), with a mean of 4. None of the respondents indicated that peer counseling had ever created a crisis or problem that was greater than the original one, although one staff member did see the possibility for such an occurrence in the future. Overall, these results indicate a moderate perception of the effectiveness of PST in dealing with crisis situations, with the program seen as being somewhat more successful in helping individual inmates as opposed to broader institutional problems.

Only one of the 11 respondents reported a positive change in the general atmosphere at Nova resulting from implementation of the PST program. This staff member indicated that there was an overall change occurring. The change was attributed to a number of factors, including effects of various programs and efforts of staff members, in addition to the effects of the PST program.

Staff members were asked to rate, on a scale from 1 (no trust) to 10 (complete trust), their level of trust for PST members. Staff's level of trust for PST members was slightly above average (M = 6, range = 4 to 8, n = 7). Five of 8 individuals also reported that their degree of trust would differ depending on the individual team member.

Four of the 11 respondents reported a change in the PST members since their involvement in the program. Some positive perceptions of change were mentioned, including the fact that PST members now showed more responsibility for their actions. Negative consequences were also listed; one staff member indicated that PST members seemed "overwhelmed at times, requiring time-out from the program".

Staff members were also asked to rate the degree to which they perceived PST to reinforce the positive effects of other programs: a) for team members, b) for all inmates. Responses were scored on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 10 (a great deal). Mean scores were 7 (range = 1 to 10) and 6 (range = 1 to 8), respectively (n = 8). These results indicate moderately high perceptions of the reinforcing effect of PST on other programs, with the effect being somewhat greater for PST members as opposed to the general population.

Finally, staff were asked whether they thought that PST counseling sessions were sometimes used by women for other purposes. Almost half of the respondents (5 of 11) replied affirmatively, indicating that PST sessions could be used to "chat" or spend time together, and that PST services might be used for

personal gain (e.g., to be excused from work or programs, and still get paid).[10] One additional respondent indicated that he/she did not believe that the counseling sessions had been misused to date; however, this individual did perceive the possibility for abuse in the future.

Overall, results suggested that staff members were cognizant of the PST program at Nova and reported some positive outcomes of the program for PST members who took the training. PST services were perceived to be moderately helpful in dealing with crisis situations and the level of trust for PST members was fairly high. There did appear to be some confusion, however, regarding the roles of "graduated team members" and "team members in training". Perhaps it could be made more clear to staff members that only team members who have completed their training and graduated from the course are able to provide counseling services.

Staff / Offender Interviews

Staff and offender interviews represented the largest component of this evaluation. Semi-structured interviews allowed for a qualitative assessment of interviewees' perceptions of the PST program. This format provided participants with the opportunity to express their own views and opinions, without imposing a particular structure on their responses. In this section, interview data (along with relevant survey and other questionnaire results) will be discussed according to the evaluation framework outlined by Eljdupovic-Guzina & Blanchette (1997). Briefly, included in this framework are issues related to the *program rational*, *availability of resources*, *implementation of the program*, *effectiveness of PST*, and *unintended effects*. For each of these five major topic areas, three different questions important to the evaluation of these issues will be addressed.

Before beginning this evaluation, it is important to highlight some of the limitations of the procedure. First, the researchers were unable to conduct any

[10] One respondent did not elaborate on his/her affirmative reply, and researchers were unable to code the final response.

interviews with offenders who had been recipients of PST counseling. It is possible that there were some recipients of the service at the institution who were simply unwilling or unable to participate in the interviews. For example, one offender completed a survey indicating that she had received peer support services once, and she also consented to participate in an individual interview. However, she was being released from Nova Institution on the same day that the researchers arrived to conduct the interviews, and was therefore unable to participate. Further, it is also possible that other recipients of the service had already left the institution at the time interviews were conducted, since many offenders at Nova serve very short sentences and the "turn-over" rate is very high.

However, it seems likely that few inmates at Nova had actually been recipients of peer support. Results of interviews with the program coordinators, staff, PST members, and other offenders seem to suggest that PST services were only requested in under a handful of situations. Some support for this can be found in the fact that interviews were conducted with 18 offenders (approximately 56% of the population at the time), yet none of these individuals reported ever using the service.

Moreover, several of the staff members who responded to the survey chose not to answer some of the questions on the survey, indicating that it was too early in the program to assess several of the issues. In fact, one staff member returned a blank survey with a note appended to the front. This individual suggested that perhaps the evaluation was somewhat premature, given that little PST counseling had actual occurred to date.

Thus, it is important to acknowledge that the PST program at Nova was in its initial stages at the time of the evaluation. Given this limitation, it may be difficult to evaluate some of the issues important to the framework, including some aspects related to the *implementation* and *effectiveness* of the program.

One final caveat is related to the issue of confidentiality. Although three individuals were participating in PST training at the time of the interviews, only one offender who had graduated from the program was still incarcerated at Nova.[11] Some of the questions refer to issues that can be answered by both groups, such as team members' perceptions of the training, particularly since the second group of PST members had almost completed their course. Other questions, however, particularly those related to PST counseling itself and issues such as "burn-out", can only be answered by PST members who have graduated, since only they can provide formal counseling services. Thus, wherever possible, the responses of these two groups of individuals will be combined in order to preserve the anonymity of the one PST member who had graduated. From this point forward, "PST members" will include both these groups of individuals, unless otherwise noted. For those questions that can only be answered by PST members who have graduated, discretion will be used in reporting the findings, and some results will not be reported at all, in order to maintain this individual's anonymity.

[11] Although two other inmates had originally graduated from the first PST training session, they were released from Nova soon after their graduation.

1. Program Rationale: Is there a need for the program?

1.1. Are the program's activities and outputs linked to achieving its effects in a valid and logical way?

The program logic model described by Eljdupovic-Guzina and Blanchette (1997) outlines both immediate and long-term goals of the PST program. Immediate effects include crisis intervention and support for offenders, whereas long-term effects involve empowerment for the women in the program and better overall management of the facility. A review of the appropriate literature and existing information regarding the PST program (Eljdupovic-Guzina & Blanchette, 1997) indicates that PST-related activities (e.g., counseling, distribution of information, etc.) are validly and logically related to the attainment of the specific goals listed above.

1.2. Does the program have its own place and function at the facility?

Several key principals of the mental health strategy that are particularly relevant to the PST program for women include: access, women-centredness, and client-participation. Results of survey and interview data indicate that the women at Nova have used PST services in only a few instances. This may have been due in part to a lack of knowledge about the program by both inmates and staff. Specifically, results indicated that 33% of staff and inmates who were interviewed were either unaware of the program, or had heard of the program, but didn't really know any of the details (e.g., what it entailed, who was involved, etc.). Furthermore, there was no Standing Order for the PST program, indicating a lack of formal recognition of the program.

Issues may have been further complicated by the fact that two of the team members who graduated from the first training session had been released soon after their graduation. Thus, the one remaining graduated PST member may have been somewhat overburdened with the responsibility of providing PST services to the entire population. Having only one team member available also

leaves potential clients without options should they feel uncomfortable talking to the available team member.

Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that the program was in its initial stages at the time of the evaluation. In fact, although there were initial concerns and suggestions for improvement to the program (to be discussed later in the paper), most interviewees thought that the implementation of the PST program could have some positive effects in the future. Thus, use of PST services at Nova will likely increase as the program continues to develop and as more PST members are trained to provide counseling services. [12]

Although there appear to be some difficulties related to access of services and client-participation (related perhaps to the newness of the program), the conception of PST as a women-centered program is definitely in keeping with the philosophy at Nova. According to a report written by the former Warden at Truro Institution (LeBlanc, 1994), "programming and the entire facility for that matter, will be community-oriented, holistic, *woman centered*, culturally sensitive, supportive of autonomy and self-esteem, and oriented toward release" (p. 12). Thus, as the program develops, and offenders become aware of and utilize PST services, the PST program will have the potential to contribute, along with other programs, to these principles.

1.3. Does the PST program serve the targeted population?

As mentioned, results of survey and interview data indicated that PST services had been used infrequently. Only one of the 10 survey respondents indicated that they had ever used PST services, and 2 were unaware that peer support was available. The most common reason for using PST services (according to survey data) was because offenders did not feel a need for the service, although two women also mentioned issues of confidentiality and trust in the PST members.

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[12] At the time of the evaluation, 3 members were receiving PST training and (depending on their performance) were expected to graduate in June. One of these trainees was serving a life-sentence and therefore might be expected to perform PST duties for longer than some of the members from the first training session, who were released soon after graduation.

Although interviews were conducted with approximately 56% of the offender population, none of these individuals indicated that they had ever been recipients of the service. In comparison to the survey data, many interviewees indicated that confidentiality and trustworthiness were major concerns for offenders contemplating the use of PST services. Almost half of the offenders interviewed (n = 8) reported either that they would never use PST services, or that they would be cautious about speaking to some of the PST members due to concerns related to potential breaches of confidentiality. Other reasons for not using the service included a lack of need for peer support and lack of knowledge about the program. In addition, several offenders mentioned that they would prefer to talk to staff members rather than fellow inmates.

An interesting comment was made by one of the offenders during her interview. She stated that, "It's more of an issue of people taking peer support to take the program, rather than for counseling". This seems to reflect a perception by some of the offenders of PST as another program provided for an individual's own benefit, as opposed to training for the purposes of providing services to other inmates. In fact, a second interviewee held exactly this view. This individual reported that she thought PST was just another program people took; she did not know that PST members were supposed to be a support system for other offenders.

Benefits to offenders who become PST members are also of importance in considering the effects of the PST program for the targeted population. In fact, PST members noted several positive effects of their involvement in the program, such as increased awareness of their own issues and limitations and well as the potential for career-related experience (e.g., psychology or other counseling).

Thus, some positive changes seem to have been experienced by the PST members themselves. Among the general population there appeared to be some difficulties related to awareness of the program, concerns about confidentiality, and a paucity of requests for PST counseling. It is important to mention, however, that none of the interviewees mentioned any actual breaches of confidentiality,

just concerns that it might happen. Moreover, several interviewees did report that they would consider using PST services in the future if they felt that they needed it, and if they could speak to a team member whom they felt that they could trust.

2. Are there adequate resources and support for establishing the PST program?

2.1. Does the Coordinator have sufficient time, acknowledgment and support for activities regarding the program?

The staff psychologist and a psychology intern shared the position of coordinator for the PST program at Nova. Results of interviews suggest that support was lacking in some areas, particularly in terms of financial resources available. At the time of this evaluation, no funding was available for the PST program at Nova. Coordinators found it difficult to recruit professions from the community to facilitate the sessions, since they were unable to pay them for their time. At the very least, coordinators would have liked to offer facilitators money for gas and travel expenses, since many of them would have to travel some distance to get to Nova (e.g., from Halifax). Thus, coordinators ran the program together, facilitating the PST training sessions themselves. Moreover, at this time, coordinators were using their own personal funds to pay for the "little extras" (e.g., coffee and donuts during training, certificates and pens for graduation).

There was some suggestion that priority for the PST program needs to come directly from NHQ. Results of interviews indicated a perceived need for a budget specifically designated for PST, channeled directly through the psychology department. It was suggested that more recognition should be given to the program, particularly since the PST program "...is not just beneficial to the women who take the program, but it is also a program where the women give back".

Coordinators indicated that they could probably manage the program on $1000.00 a year, or slightly more. This would provide funding for supplies and snacks for the training sessions, money for a graduation ceremony, some funds for the development of a PST-brochure, and perhaps a nominal fee of $50 for

community professionals to facilitate the training. Some additional concerns were raised regarding the availability of staff to organize the program, since one of the co-coordinators (psychology intern) will be leaving Nova in July. Thus, it was suggested that additional funding to pay someone to help with the coordination of the PST program might be helpful in this regard.

The availability of offenders who could potentially serve as PST members within the institution was also an issue. At the time of the evaluation, there was only one PST member remaining at Nova who had graduated from the first training session. Three additional women had almost completed their training, but were unable to provide peer support services since they had not yet graduated. The paucity of offenders available to provide these services may be due in part to the relatively small population of offenders at Nova, as well as the fact that many of these women are serving short sentences. Thus, even if women who meet the appropriate criteria are available to take the training, many of them may be released before they have much time to provide these services to their peers.

In summary, it seems that more resources and support will be needed to implement the PST program successfully at Nova. Assistance may be required in various areas including: financial support, assistance in running the program, and perhaps more physical space for training and PST-related meetings. In addition, it might be helpful to recruit some offenders who have the potential to be good PST members, but who are also serving moderate to long-term sentences, if any are available. This would ensure the presence of several PST members who could provide counseling services for some time following completion of the training program.

2.2. Is the training of the Team members sufficient?

The PST training manual (CSC, 1996a) consists of 17 topics, each of which is generally covered in one three-hour session. Some modifications were made to training manual as well as the guidelines presented in the Coordinator Manual (CSC, 1996b), in order to better facilitate implementation of the program at Nova.

According to the Manual, the use of outside facilitators is important in creating links between the prison and the community in order to provide support for the women upon release. Furthermore, results of a pilot study of the PST program at Edmonton Institution indicated that the inclusion of *volunteer* professionals to facilitate the training sessions was perceived by offenders to be empowering. As mentioned in the previous section, however, some difficulty was experienced in recruiting volunteers, especially since many of them had to travel some distance to the institution. Thus, psychological staff at Nova led the training sessions themselves, rather than recruiting volunteers from the community.

Second, two major sections were appended to the information already included in the training manual (CSC, 1996a). The first dealt with information regarding the "Structured Living House" which will be opening soon at Nova for individuals who have special needs. The second module is entitled Peer Education Counseling (PEC) which involves training to provide counseling for those with HIV & AIDS. The staff nurse originally presented PEC training separately from PST training. However, staff indicated that the combination of the two programs works well at Nova, since offenders can request counseling for HIV-related issues from PST members. In this way, information regarding their illness is kept confidential, since other offenders do not know whether they are requesting PST for medical or personal reasons. Some minor changes were also made in the presentation of several topics (e.g., self-injury, homosexuality, and childhood sexual abuse).

Finally, one modification to the screening criteria presented in the Coordinator Manual (CSC, 1996b) was made. According to the criteria in the manual, PST trainees should remain at the institution for at least six months in order to be available to provide some counseling after graduation. Due to the short sentences of many of the women at Nova, the criterion for inclusion was modified from a 6-month to a 3-month stay at the institution.

Interviews were conducted with both graduated team members and team members in training.[13] At the time of data collection, PST training for the second group of PST members was almost completed; only a few weeks of training remained. PST members were asked to rate the quality of their training on a scale ranging from 1 (not at all helpful) to 10 (very helpful). Two members gave a rating of 10; one responded with a score of 8, and the final member rated the training as somewhat helpful (6). Thus, overall, the training was rated quite positively. One offender reported that that she liked the training because it covered so many topics, indicating that it, "prepares you for anything that will come up in PST". One woman did comment, however, that some of the topics were more relevant to the environment at P4W. She suggested that things were different at Nova, since the staff at Nova see themselves more as "Workers", not "Guards", and are therefore more approachable.

Although most of the PST members perceived the training and the manual to be quite useful, one offender suggested some areas for improvement. According to this PST member, the training was good in terms of the information given regarding issues that might be experienced by women offenders. However, she would have liked more instruction regarding the actual process involved in providing PST counseling itself. For example, how might you make yourself more accessible to potential recipients, particularly if a PST member does not have an overly "out-going" personality to being with. She suggested that, "...the training tells you what to do, but not how to do it. The manual says this is what PST is, now go figure it out for yourself." It is possible that some information regarding this issue could be included in a revised version of the manual. Alternatively, it may be that this individual might benefit from some initial support or information provided by coordinators or fellow PST members, as she begins her role as a support provider.

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[13] An interview was also conducted with one team member who began the training but had to leave the PST program, due to scheduling problems (PST training was offered at the same time as another program specified on her correctional plan). Results of her interview will not be discussed in the present paper, in order to maintain the confidentiality of her responses.

PST members reported several personal benefits resulting from the training. First, PST members were appreciative of the opportunity to learn more about other individuals, and to gain knowledge pertinent to helping those in need. In fact, several of the women sugg ested that they would like to pursue careers in counseling or psychology. They felt that learning to work as a team member and learning how to help others would benefit them in reaching this goal.

Second, PST members indicated that they learned a lot about themselves. They reported that the training helped them to deal with, and better understand, their own issues. Several women reported increased coping skills for dealing with different people and situations. Another PST member said, "PST gives me a chance to grow". She indicated that PST would help her learn more about herself and her own limits and boundaries, so that she could then learn to help others. Finally, one offender reported that she now realized the importance of taking care of herself first, before trying to help others.

One offender suggested that even if an individual did not become a PST member (i.e., graduate), the training would still be a benefit to that person. In fact, another PST member reported that she was taking the program simply for own personal benefit. She reported that she enjoys the training and has learned a lot from it. However, she does not feel that she has the time to provide counseling services to others, since she has her own personal issues to deal with and other programs that she needs to complete.

Overall, all individuals who received the training rated it quite positively. Offenders perceived that the skills and knowledge gained during training would help them deal with their own issues in addition to helping other women who needed it. In addition, knowledge gained during PST training helped to define offenders' interests. Specifically, several women reported that knowledge gained during training would be relevant to future counseling-related careers.

2.3. Is Team members' participation in establishing the program acknowledged and balanced with other duties?

Results of surveys and interviews seemed to suggest that PST services were not being utilized to a high degree at present. Thus an assessment of team members' ability to balance PST counseling duties with other commitments seems somewhat premature at this time. Thus, the focus of the present section will be on acknowledgement of the program by staff and inmates, in addition to the ability to schedule time for PST training.

Overall, most offenders reported that they thought the program was a good idea; they suggested that many of the women at Nova might appreciate the option of speaking to their peers about their problems. In addition, over half of the women interviewed could see the possibility of using peer support services in the future if they felt that they needed it and could speak to a team member who they trusted. Concerns were mentioned, however, regarding trustworthiness of some of the team members and the potential for breaches of confidentiality.

Similarly, many of the staff members expressed positive perceptions of the PST program and mentioned a number of potential benefits for recipients, PST members, and staff members. They indicated that PST might be an avenue for offenders uncomfortable with or unwilling to speak to staff members. One interviewee suggested that, "it's one of those types of programs where, even if it's helping only 10% of the population, it's good". In addition, they believed the process to be empowering for the women, allowing them to solve problems on their own. These skills were perceived to be necessary upon release from the institution, when staff would no longer be available for consultation.

Staff members reported potential benefits to PST members themselves, including a sense of empowerment, as well as increased responsibility and leadership skills. Also, PST members could potentially serve as positive role models for other offenders, encouraging others to engage in more positive and responsible behaviour. Furthermore, they suggested that the process of offenders relying on one another had the potential to strengthen relationships between the women.

One staff member stated the following; "The PST program is in keeping with the whole philosophy of Nova. And it happens anyway, informally, whether it is done 'well' or 'not well'. By giving them more training and support, it is less likely to be damaging."

Staff also raised some concerns about the program. Some worries were related to the perceived competence and trustworthiness of individual team members. There was some concern about "PST members making things worse instead of better" as well as PST members taking advantage of their position to gain power and control over other offenders. One staff member was also concerned that some PST members might see themselves as real counselors and try to deal with situations that was beyond their knowledge and capabilities.

Finally, there appeared to be some difficulty with regards to scheduling of the training sessions. Staff members indicated that many of the offenders at Nova serve very short sentences. As such, they have a short time to try to complete the programs specified on their correctional plan, which are necessary for conditional release. Since the PST program is not included in offenders' correctional plan at intake, other programs are given priority. Thus, PST training has to be scheduled around other programs at the institution. In some cases, if offenders take PST, then they will be unable to participate in other programs like cognitive skills, and parenting. In fact, one woman started taking the second PST training session, but had to drop out of the program, due to scheduling conflicts with other programs specified on her correctional plan. Thus, only women who are not participating in other programs at the time of PST training are able to participate in the PST program.

Overall, results seem to indicate that both offenders and staff are generally supportive of the PST program at Nova. There appear to be some difficulties, however, related to scheduling of time for PST members to participate in the training sessions. In this sense, it seems that other programs may be given higher priority, likely due to the relevance of these programs for conditional release. Perhaps the PST program needs to be given some legitimacy in terms of

the potential benefits to PST members, particularly as they might be applicable to release opportunities. This might increase staff members' commitment to the program.

3. Implementation: Are activities of the program organized in a way that its goals can be achieved?

3.1. Is the prison community familiar with the program and its activities?

Offender Awareness

Results of surveys indicated that 80% of the offenders were aware of the PST program; those who were unaware of the program had only been at Nova for one month. Of those who were cognizant of the program, half knew who the team members were and 75% knew how to submit a request for counseling.

Results of interviews were similar to those obtained through the use of surveys. Four of the 18 offenders interviewed had never heard of the PST program at the time of the evaluation, and several had heard of the program based on their experience with PST at other institutions (P4W, Grand Valley Institution). Some of the other women were aware of the PST program at Nova, but seemed unclear about the purpose of the program and the availability of counseling services. In fact, several offenders perceived the program to be something that PST members took simply for their own benefit and seemed unaware of the opportunity to request counseling services for themselves.

Many of the interviewees, however, had some good suggestions for increasing awareness about the program among the offender population. Several offenders reported that "word of mouth" was a good method, and that maybe PST members should explain the program to other inmates. Additional suggestions included posting notices in each house and distributing brochures through the mail.

Many offenders were also concerned that new women coming in to the enhanced unit did not know about the program, since this might be a time when support

would be needed the most. Interviewees suggested that posters should be placed in the unit and that staff members should mention the program to new arrivals. Also, they indicated that it might be useful if a PST member went to the enhanced unit to inform new offenders about the program.

A number of staff members made similar suggestions with respect to increasing awareness of the program among the offender population. Several individuals suggested the use of pamphlets or perhaps even an "offender handbook" to increase offender awareness of the program. Similar to offenders' responses, many staff members indicated the need to provide new offenders in the enhanced unit with facts about PST. This could involve information presented by team members, or the inclusion of PST information in one of the modules presented to new offenders during their orientation.

Staff Awareness

As mentioned previously, staff members who responded to the surveys indicated that they knew about the PST program. Information was distributed primarily by "word of mouth", with respondents reporting that they learned about the program from the psychologists, other staff, or offenders. No visual displays of information were apparent, either in the form of posters or brochures. In addition, one of the respondents listed the researchers conducting interviews as a sole source of information about PST, suggesting a lack of awareness about the program prior to this time.

Most staff members knew who the team members were, and over half knew how to proceed if an offender requested counseling services. Estimates of awareness based on survey data, however, may have been somewhat inflated due to the fact that a number of surveys were returned <u>after</u> the interviews had been completed. For example, the issue of identities of team members often arose during interviews, and if interviewees did not know who PST members were, this information was often provided by the researchers.

Results of interviews indicated that several staff members were well informed about the PST program, expressing knowledge regarding identities of team members, processes involved in counseling and other specifics regarding the program. Moreover, a couple of respondents mentioned a specific instance in which PST had been utilized with positive results. The majority of staff interviewees, however, indicated that they had heard of the PST program and perceived it to be "inmates helping inmates", but admitted that they knew little else about the program.

Staff seemed to be lacking information in a number of areas, including: skills taught in training, processes involved in requesting peer counseling, and roles and responsibilities of team members. Many were confused about the administration and structure of the program since it was organized in a different manner than other programs they were used to, like cognitive skills, substance abuse, and so on.

Several staff members were curious about the screening process for PST members (i.e., who selects them, what were the criteria for inclusion or exclusion). Furthermore, a number of employees expressed an interest in contributing to this process, perhaps by providing referrals for potential team members, who could then be screened by the psychologists to determine suitability for the PST program.

Based on these findings, it might be helpful to include staff in the screening process by recruiting a representative from security to act as a members of the screening committee (as suggested in the PST Coordinator Manual, 1996b). Additionally, or alternatively, referrals might be solicited from primary workers and other "front-line" staff who have frequent and direct contact with offenders. One interviewee made the following point, "Everyone in the institution knows the inmates to varying degrees. If you depend on one or two people to make the selection, then they don't know everyone."

In addition, some concerns were voiced regarding the fact that staff received little information regarding results of training (i.e., skills learned, goals achieved,

attendance, participation, and evaluation of individual progress in the program). This information might be helpful for two reasons. First, staff suggested that they would be more confident referring offenders for PST counseling if they had more knowledge about the skills learned and accomplishments made by team members during training. This would give staff members some idea of their ability to provide counseling services to other offenders. Second, a formal assessment of their accomplishments could then be included in their files as additional information to be considered when determining suitability for release opportunities, such as parole.

There was a general consensus among staff interviewees that they needed more information regarding the program in order to better promote and facilitate the use of PST services among the women. Suggestions for dissemination of knowledge included: staff meetings with the coordinators, distribution of information through e-mail or on the infonet, as well as the possibility of asking PST members about the program.

Summary

At this stage in the development of the PST program, information for both staff and offenders is necessary to maximize its effectiveness. Although the majority of staff and offenders indicated that they had heard of the PST program, information was lacking regarding the specifics of the program (e.g., availability of counseling services, the role of PST in crisis intervention, processes involved in requesting counseling, identities of team members).

Awareness of the PST program among offenders might be increased simply by posting notices in strategic places, developing brochures explaining the program, and providing information to new arrivals in the enhanced unit (e.g., team members introducing themselves, orientation given by staff members at intake, etc.). Some additional education regarding the program may be necessary for staff, however.

Some staff members suggested e-mail messages and a meeting with the coordinators to learn more about the program. Notably, staff was initially informed about the program via e-mail and an information session was organized for staff members. However, attendance at this session was minimal and results of the present report indicate that information regarding the program is still lacking in several areas.

One employee made the comment that information sessions planned in the past have not been organized at a time that was best for staff, and that perhaps employees were not made to feel that the session was a priority. In addition, most of the front-line staff work different shifts and are not all available to meet at the same time. This interviewee suggested a mandatory meeting, just before or after a shift-change where all employees could attend, even if one shift of employees had to be paid for the extra hour they had to remain at the institution. She indicated that this would send a message that the program was a priority; the program is important, mandatory, and it's going to happen.

Implementation of a Standing Order describing the PST program and the procedures involved might also be useful in increasing awareness about the program and conveying more legitimacy. One interviewee, however, suggested that more information should be given to employees before implementing a Standing Order. Otherwise, there might be a lot of resistance to the program, since staff members would simply be directed to follow the objectives without really knowing what the program was all about and its potential benefits. One employee suggested that, "staff may sabotage the PST program in little ways through lack of information about the helpfulness of the program...if people are invested in the process and making the program work, there will be a higher success rate".

In summary, it is important to remember that the PST program was in its initial stages at the time of this evaluation, and awareness of the program will likely increase as it develops. For instance, at the time of data collection, coordinators and PST members were discussing plans for the creation and distribution of

brochures and posters advertising the program at Nova. Also, issues have been complicated by the fact that only one graduated PST member remains at Nova. As more offenders participate in and graduate from the program, there will be more individuals available to aid in dissemination of information regarding PST counseling services.

3.2. Is peer counseling meeting the needs of its recipients?

At the time of this evaluation, PST counseling does not appear to have been utilized to a high degree (only one of the survey respondents, and none of the offenders interviewed reported that they had been recipients of PST services). Reasons for not using the service included lack of knowledge regarding availability of counseling services, lack of trust in PST members, perceptions that the counseling session would not remain confidential, and a lack of need for PST counseling.

On the positive side, however, the majority of offenders interviewed reported that they thought the program was a good idea, mentioning: the advantage of being able to talk to other offenders should you be uncomfortable talking to staff members, benefits of speaking to individuals who have had similar experiences (i.e., "girls who you know and who have been there"), as well as the availability of support at times when staff psychologists may be busy or unavailable. In addition, over half of interviewees could see the possibility of using peer support services in the future if they felt that they needed it and could speak to a team member who they trusted.

Several women, however, indicated that they would prefer to talk to staff members rather than peers. Reasons for this preference included worries about confidentiality being breached as well as the nature of the issue to be discussed. Specifically, one offender indicated that she would prefer to talk to staff regarding difficulties with her correctional plan, since they have the authority to do something about it. On the other hand, many of those who reported that they would likely use PST services often mentioned that they would welcome the

opportunity to speak to peers about personal issues (e.g., depression, family-related issues).

Due to the fact that PST counseling has not been utilized to a high degree, a detailed examination of the potential for PST activities to meet the needs of its recipients is not possible. The researchers suggest that recipients' perceptions of their counseling experiences be examined at some future date, when more offenders begin to utilize the program. Based on the available evidence, however, it appears that the PST program has the potential to meet the needs of women at Nova in the future. Most offenders expressed positive views about the program, suggesting that they would use these services if they felt that they needed it and could speak to a team member who they trusted. With respect to confidentiality issues, it is important to note that none of the interviewees mentioned any actual breaches of confidentiality, just concerns that it might occur. Therefore, if PST members are able to gain the trust of their peers by acting responsibly with respect to confidentiality issues when providing counseling services, this concern will likely diminish.

3.3. Are the coordinator, other staff involved and Team members' consultations providing sufficient support and exchange of information?

At the time of this evaluation, the PST program at Nova was comprised of the following individuals: two co-coordinators, one graduated team member, and three team members in training. According to the Coordinator Manual (CSC, 1996b), a Steering Committee should be formed consisting of: the PST coordinator, the Warden, a PST Chair, and a PST Secretary. At the present time, a Steering Committee has not been formed at Nova, likely due to the small number of team members available to fill some of these positions (PST Chair, PST Secretary). Therefore, the focus in the present section will be on the quality of relationships and exchange of information between the coordinators and team members.

Based on the lack of a Steering Committee and the present focus on training new PST members, the program seems to be directed more by the coordinators rather than the offenders at this point. At this time, there has been little exchange of information regarding peer support services provided. No regular meetings are held with team members to discuss counseling sessions, and records have not been kept regarding PST services given. This may not have been entirely necessary at this time, given the small amount of PST counseling being done. Coordinators did mention, however, that they would try to hold regular weekly meetings in the future.

Results of interviews seem to suggest that team members support each other and have a good rapport, although there was some suggestion that the quality of these relationships varied depending on the individuals in question. Team members also reported positive relationships with the two coordinators of the program. Coordinators were described as good facilitators for the training sessions. They were perceived as providing a supportive environment that encouraged discussion, and offenders felt comfortable asking for clarification and further information regarding any issue. In fact, the three PST members who graduated from the first training session wrote a "thank-you" letter to the coordinators expressing their appreciation for "demonstrating to us what the word 'team' is". They also suggested that the coordinators had served as "positive role models" for the PST members during their training.

The coordinators themselves suggested that they perceived several benefits to their shared role in coordinating the program and facilitating the sessions. In addition to the support they provided to each other by sharing the duties and responsibilities, coordinators perceived benefits for the PST members. Specifically, the women were able to witness the positive and cooperative nature of the coordinators' interactions with each other, which served as a model of positive interactions for the offenders.

Thus, although there was little exchange of information regarding counseling services, quality of the relationships between coordinators and team members

were perceived quite positively. As offenders begin to utilize PST services to a greater degree, it will be necessary to have more regular contact between staff and PST members in order to provide counselors with sufficient support to perform their duties effectively.

4. Is the program effective?

4.1. To what extent does the program help in crisis intervention?

Results of the present study indicate that staff members see a limited role for PST counseling in crisis intervention. As mentioned earlier, survey data suggest that staff rate the effectiveness of the PST program somewhat moderately in terms of the ability to assist in or prevent crises. Specifically, on a scale of 1 to 10, the mean effectiveness was rated as "5" for providing aide to individual inmates and "4" in terms of the ability of the program to mitigate institutional crises.

During individual interviews with staff, the role of PST in crisis intervention was not mentioned very often. A few staff members indicated that PST could help to prevent potential institutional crisis. One individual suggested that PST members might possibly help staff to control and diffuse volatile situations.

A second interviewee was adamant, however, that PST counseling should never be used for crisis intervention in any circumstances. She suggested that, in instances where there is an issue related to the safety and security of staff and other inmates, PST members should notify staff and "step-back". She seemed concerned that the PST member might be more of a hindrance than a help; "What if a staff member asks a PST member to leave because of issues of safety and security and the PST member refuses to leave. Then staff have one more person to deal with." In making this statement, this employee also seemed very concerned about the safety of the PST members who might be involved, indicating that their involvement in a crisis situation might jeopardize their safety as well.

In summary, results seem to indicate a low to moderate perception of the ability of the PST program to help in mitigating institutional crises. However, results of this evaluation indicate that PST counseling services have been utilized to a limited degree at present. Thus, staff's responses may be based more on their perceptions of the potential for effectiveness of the program in crisis intervention, rather than their actual knowledge about its effectiveness in past PST counseling interventions. Thus, it may be beneficial to assess this aspect of the effectiveness of peer counseling in the future, when the program has been in use for a longer period of time.

4.2. Did the atmosphere and management of the facility improve after implementation of the PST program?

Results of survey data provide little evidence for change in the atmosphere of the facility following implementation of the PST program. Only one offender responded affirmatively to this question; however, she neglected to mention what type of change had actually occurred. In addition, one of the staff members indicated that she perceived an overall positive change in the atmosphere that she attributed to several factors (e.g., various programs and efforts of staff) in addition to the influence of the PST program.

Similar findings were obtained from individual interviews with staff. A few interviewees indicated that they perceived a positive change within the institution, mostly due to perceived differences in the individuals who participated in PST training. Staff reported that PST members had changed both on an individual level (e.g., more self-confident) and more generally as a group, exhibiting greater trust and cooperation.

Most interviewees, however, indicated that they did not perceive any change in the atmosphere as a result of the PST program. In general, staff reported that the program was new and it was too early to determine whether it had influenced the environment. One employee suggested that the environment at Nova is very "open" and positive to begin with, and that PST could only help to build on this atmosphere. In fact, several individuals suggested that, although PST had not

made any definite impact upon the environment yet, it definitely had the potential to do so in the future (e.g., better staff-offender and offender-offender relationships).

In summary, results seem to indicate little perception of change in the atmosphere following implementation of the PST program. Several interviewees indicated that it was not entirely fair to say that the program had no effect at this time, since the program had only been in effect for a short time. Furthermore, a number of staff members suggested that it was difficult to accurately assess the impact of any one program, since there are so many different factors that might be influencing the atmosphere (e.g., effects of other programs, over-population). Thus, it may be impossible to determine how one particular program is affecting the environment, when so many additional factors are operating simultaneously.

4.3. Are the offenders involved in the program empowered by it?

Results discussed at several points throughout this paper suggest that the PST program is empowering for the women who participate in the training sessions. Trainees reported several benefits of the session including personal growth and development. For example, these women reported that they learned a lot about dealing with their own issues, and had gained the skills and confidence to help themselves as well as others. In addition, two of the team members perceived that their experiences and skills gained from PST training would help them with future career plans in counseling-related fields.

A related issue concerns the empowerment of PST members as a function of their role in directing the PST program. At this point in time, the program seems to be managed more by the coordinators than PST members. However, this appears to be a function of the stage at which the program is presently operating. Specifically, with only one graduated PST member available to provide counseling services, much of the coordinators' is focused on training new members for the program.

One aspect of the PST program that was perceived to be empowering for the women of Edmonton Institution was the fact that unpaid professionals were recruited to facilitate the training sessions (Blanchette & Eljdupovic-Guzina, 1998). Women at Edmonton reported that the fact that these professionals volunteered to help them, without payment, showed that the trainees were valued. This process infused PST members with a sense of self-worth and a perception that "they are worth it". There were some difficulties related to recruiting volunteer at Nova Institution, perhaps due to the distance some professionals might have to travel to get to the institution. However, in the future, it may be useful to attempt to recruit volunteers to facilitate some of the sessions, or even to serve as guest speakers on some occasions. In addition, as the program develops it will be important to actively involve offenders in the running of the program, including any decisions that might need to be made (e.g., issues of access to counseling, communication with staff, etc.).

The PST program also has the potential to be empowering for recipients of the service. The ability to express opinions based on personal perspectives with other women who are going through similar experiences may be particularly important. In addition, the fact that women are able to direct their own care by requesting counseling services when they want them, in addition to choosing the PST counselor of their choice also contributes to the empowerment of women offenders.

At this point in time, some of the women seem unaware of the program and their ability to access counseling services when they need it. Plans were being made, however, to develop posters and brochures to be distributed within the institution which will address this issue.

A related concern is the availability of PST members to provide counseling services. At present only one graduated PST member remains at the institution, thus limiting recipients' abilities to select a counselor of their choice. This difficulty is also being remedied by the current training of three new PST members. Furthermore, several interviewees suggested that they would be interested in

volunteering to become PST members now that they know more about the program. One inmate suggested that more opportunities should be available for different types of individuals to volunteer and apply to participate in the training. Thus, greater empowerment for recipients of the PST program is likely in the future as awareness is increased and more individuals become interested in the program, including training and use of the services.

5. Does the program create any unintended positive or negative effects?

5.1. Does training for the PST program reinforce effects of other programs that the Team members are participating in? Does it help to define their interests?

Results of surveys indicated that staff perceived some reinforcing effects of the PST program for other programs at the institution, although this effect was reported to be slightly greater for PST members than for other offenders. During individual interviews, one staff member indicated that she thought that participation in PST training might have positive effects for individual's who participate in substance abuse programs. One of the offenders was also cognizant of potential links between programs, stating that she saw "carry-over of material in PST training from other programs like cognitive skills".

A potentially indirect effect of PST on other programs was mentioned by one of the facilitators of another program. This individual mentioned that lately, she had witnessed fewer conflicts between offenders during class time, although she did mention that she was unsure whether this factor was a result of the PST program or not. Thus, in addition to the reinforcing effects of PST on programs based on content and material taught, PST may also have an indirect effect on other programs in terms of decreasing overall conflict. If facilitators have to spend less time dealing with disagreements between offenders, then more time can be focused on program material, possibly leading to greater learning and success in the program.

Finally, two of the four PST members perceived that experience gained from participation in the program would benefit them in future career endeavors. One woman indicated that she had some previous experience counseling in the community. She appreciated the opportunity to gain further skills and experience through participation in the PST program, suggesting that she would like to pursue a career in counseling upon release. A second offender indicated that she was very interested in psychology. She perceived the PST program to be "the next best thing" and was interested in participating in the program so that she could help people and gain some experience related to the field. Thus, evidence suggests that participation in the PST program provided several offenders with the skills and experience they perceived to be valuable in pursuing future counseling-related careers and goals.

5.2. Do Team members experience pressure and burnout due to peer counseling?

As mentioned, there was only one PST member available to provide counseling services at the time of this evaluation. In order to preserve the confidentiality of her responses, her perceptions of burnout as a result of counseling duties will not be discussed here. Instead the focus of this discussion will be on staff perceptions of the potential for burnout due to PST counseling responsibilities, the effect of having only one graduated PST member at the institution, and safeguards that have been implemented to prevent burnout.

Several staff members indicated that they were worried about potential stressors associated with being a PST member. A concern was raised that PST members might be over-burdened if they had a lot of requests for counseling. According to some staff, the women have enough issues of their own, and having to deal with other offenders' problems may just be too much for them.

This consideration might have some merit, especially given the fact that only one graduated team member remained at Nova to provide counseling services to her peers. Results seem to indicate that requests for counseling have been infrequent to this point. If more offenders become interested in using the service,

however, there is the possibility that this PST member might become overwhelmed.

Thus, several mechanisms have been put in place to prevent burnout from occurring. First, team members are able to remove themselves from active PST duties for a period of time if they feel that they need it. Second, PST members do not counsel offenders who live in the same house as they do. This gives team members their own time and space to relax and take a break from their duties if they need it. Although this seems to be a necessary precaution, the unfortunate result of this decision is that, since there was only one PST member at the time, offenders living in that members' house were unable to utilize peer counseling services.

At this point in time, burnout does not seem to be an issue, due to the limited degree to which counseling services are being used. In addition, several safeguards are in place to prevent burnout from occurring. Thus, the main concern at the present time is the fact that the one graduated PST member might be feeling overwhelmed at the prospect of being the sole service provider for the entire population. However, this problem should be remedied in the near future if several of the team members presently participating in training graduate to become full "PST members".

5.3. Do any negative side effects result from the PST program?

At this point, it is difficult to determine whether any negative side effects might result from implementation of the PST program at Nova. Staff members voiced several concerns regarding the potential impact of the program on institutional security as well as relationships between staff and inmates.

First, several staff members were worried about security and safety issues. If offenders are speaking to PST members about their problems, then staff may never hear about them. Staff may be unaware of underlying tensions, or even some criminal behaviors (e.g., abuse, extortion). According to staff members, in these instances, "PST members could provide support, but security should also

be informed". A number of interviewees seemed unsure whether use of the PST program would cut off this flow of information or not. One staff member indicated that it was an issue of trusting PST members to provide information when personal or institutional safety was at risk.

Staff members also expressed some concerns about how the use of PST counseling services might influence staff-offender relationships. According to LeBlanc (1994), security practices at Nova "...will always be a balance of supervision and sound programming within a supportive environment," (p.12). Thus, in addition to their supervisory duty, staff at Nova also function in a "helping role", and offenders are encouraged to talk to staff members if they have problems of any kind. One staff member indicated that communication between staff and inmates "...helps to break down the 'us and them' attitude. It is a risk that inmates take to trust staff, and some positive gains have been made this way. If there is an option to talk to an inmate, there is the possibility that staff may lose this. Staff look for these opportunities, especially for the ones who are the hardest to reach." In fact almost half of all staff members interviewed mentioned this issue, either with respect to their own worries or in terms of concerns they heard discussed by fellow staff members. In general, there was a concern that the positive rapport presently existing between staff and inmates might suffer with the implementation of the PST program, since there might be less need for offenders to talk to staff about their problems.

Results from the sociogram as well as individual interviews, however, indicate that this may not necessarily be the case. Results of the post-program sociogram indicate that all offenders included in the analysis cited at least one staff member as a source of moral support. These findings are somewhat preliminary given the fact that the PST program was in its initial stages at the time of this evaluation. However, the results do suggest that offenders are likely to seek support from both staff as well as their peers at this point in the development of the program.

Moreover, during individual interviews, a number of offenders reported that they would still prefer to talk to staff members rather than peers when they had a problem, even with the implementation of the PST program. Reasons for this preference included worries about breaches of confidentiality by PST members, as well as the belief that staff members might be more helpful when dealing with certain problems (i.e., correctional plans and programming). It is also important to mention that several offenders indicated that they would never speak to staff members about their personal issues, regardless of any other options they may or may not have. For these women, PST services may be an essential service, since they may not feel that alternative options are available.

At this point, it is not possible to determine whether implementation of the PST program will in fact result in a decrease in staff-offender communication. As awareness of the program increases and offenders begin to use it to a greater extent, it will be important to monitor this issue in order to determine whether staff concerns are justified.

CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Findings

Results of the present report provide a preliminary evaluation of the PST program at Nova Institution. Results indicate that PST related activities are validly and logically related to the goals of the program. Overall, most staff and offenders who participated in this study expressed positive views of the program, indicating that the program could potentially benefit both PST members and recipients of the service.

Despite beliefs regarding potential benefits for recipients, however, results of the present evaluation indicate that PST services have actually been utilized infrequently to the present time. Specifically, only one of the survey respondents, and none of the interviewees indicated that they had ever requested peer support. Main reasons for not using the service included lack of awareness regarding the program, concerns about breaches of confidentiality, and lack of perceived need for peer support. Many women, however, reported the possibility of using PST services in the future if they felt that they needed it and could speak to a team member that they trusted. Moreover, concerns regarding confidentiality issues seemed to be related more to perceived potential for breaches of trust, rather than a result of any actual negative experiences.

Knowledge of the program was lacking in several areas. Most staff and offenders were aware of the program and knew it was in operation at Nova Institution. However, there was a general lack of awareness regarding the specifics of the program. For example, a number of offenders reported that they had heard about the PST program, but perceived it to be something women took simply for their own benefit. They seemed unaware of the opportunity to request peer support services from individuals who had graduated from the program. In addition, there was some confusion among staff members regarding the identities of team members, and processes involved in requesting peer support services.

Some concerns were also mentioned regarding the availability of resources for the PST program. There was no funding for the program at the time of this evaluation. Moreover, difficulties were expected with regards to availability of staff to coordinate the program in the future, since one of the coordinators was leaving Nova soon after the evaluation was conducted.

Several staff members also expressed concerns that implementation of the PST program might negatively influence the positive rapport between staff and offenders. Specifically, they were worried that offenders might use the opportunity to speak exclusively to their peers, thus eliminating positive communication presently existing between staff and offenders. It is difficult to assess the validity of this concern at the moment, due to the newness of the program at Nova. Results of interviews did indicate, however, that several offenders reported that they would prefer to talk to staff members regardless of opportunities presented by the PST program. Therefore, this is an issue that should be investigated when offenders begin to utilize PST services more frequently, in order to determine whether these concerns are in fact justified.

At the time of this evaluation, PST members appear to have been the greatest beneficiaries of the program. Positive gains were reported for individuals participating in PST training, including a better understanding of themselves, gaining skills to deal with their own as well as other offenders' issues, as well as the opportunity for possible career-related experience.

In summary, results suggest overall support for the program by the majority of staff and offenders. Although some difficulties were experienced due to lack of knowledge regarding the program and the relative lack of use of peer support services, these problems will likely be addressed as the program continues to develop. Unfortunately, our ability to evaluate some aspects of the program was somewhat limited at this time. In particular, it was difficult to assess whether the PST program was meeting the needs of its recipients, the extent that PST helped in crisis intervention, change in atmosphere subsequent to program implementation, degree of pressure and burnout for PST members, as well as

negative side effects of the program. Thus, these aspects of the program should be re-evaluated at some future date.

Study Limitations

There were some limitations to the present research. First, difficulties were experienced regarding analysis of pre- versus post-program measures due to the fact that all questionnaires, with the exception of the sociogram, were returned anonymously. Results indicate that only 2 offenders responded to both the pre- and post-program sociogram, indicating that the pre- and post-program samples for this measure were composed of almost entirely different offenders. No information was available regarding the identities of individuals who responded to the self-esteem measure and the Correctional Environment Status Inventory (CESI). However, one might assume that the pre-program sample consisted mostly of different offenders than those who were included in the post-program sample for these measures as well.

Based on this factor, comparison of pre- to post-program differences was confounded with the characteristics of the individuals who responded before and after program implementation. This may be particularly relevant to the analysis of the self-esteem data, since self-esteem is an individual difference characteristic. Thus, one can not say that differences from pre- to post-program reflect change in self-esteem, but rather differences in the self-esteem of individuals who responded pre-program from those who responded post-program implementation.

Since the prison population is constantly changing (i.e., some offenders are being released or transferred, and new ones are arriving), it may be difficult to recruit the same individuals to respond to both pre- and post-test measures. However, in future evaluations, it might be useful to give participants some sort of identification number (or let them make up their own). Use of this method would

enable researchers to determine correspondence between pre- and post-test participants, while still maintaining anonymity of offenders' responses.

An additional caveat should be mentioned with respect to the administration of post-test measures. At the time that individual interviews were conducted, few post-program measures (i.e., Rosenberg's self-esteem scale, sociogram, CESI, staff and offender surveys) had been completed. Thus, additional attempts were made to distribute these questionnaires when the researchers arrived at the institution to conduct interviews. Many staff and offenders returned these questionnaires subsequent to individual interviews. Thus, survey responses related to awareness of the program may have been inflated, since some issues discussed during interviews were also present in the surveys (e.g., identities of team members).

Finally, as mentioned previously, the PST program was in the initial stages of its development at the time of this evaluation. Thus, our ability to evaluate some aspects of the program was somewhat limited at this point (e.g., benefits to recipients, atmosphere change, and negative side effects). These issues were discussed as best as possible based on available information. However, the researchers suggest that these issues be re-evaluated at some later date, when the program has been in operation for a longer duration and more women have received PST training.

Recommendations for potential program improvement

At this point in time, development of the PST program is progressing steadily. Many staff members and offenders who participated in this study reported generally positive perceptions of the program, including the opportunity for offenders to speak to someone with similar life experiences, as well as positive gains experienced by team members as a result of participation in PST training. Difficulties with the program at this point appear to be related to the degree to which offenders are utilizing peer support services as well as a lack of awareness regarding certain aspects of the program.

At the time of this evaluation, few women were utilizing PST services. There are several possible reasons for this. First, although three PST members were originally trained to provide peer support, two of them were released soon after graduation from the program. Thus, only one graduated PST member was available to provide support services for the entire population. In order to remedy this situation, more PST members need to be trained to provide peer support. In particular, it might be helpful to have some women who are serving long sentences serve as team members if any who possess the necessary skills and attributes are available. This would ensure adequate human resources for the continuation of the PST program at this institution.[14]

A second reason for the paucity of requests for peer support services appears to be related to a lack of awareness of the program on the part of offenders. Several offenders reported that they had never heard of the PST program prior to the evaluation. Moreover, of the individuals who expressed knowledge regarding the existence of the program, several were confused about the role of PST members

[14] This issue was being addressed at the time this report was being written. At the time of data collection, three additional offenders were participating in a second PST training session. Personal communication with the staff psychologist (August 23, 1999) revealed that all three women graduated to become PST members. In addition, a third training session had been completed by the end of August, from which 5 new PST members had graduated.

once they had graduated from the program. Specifically, the PST program was perceived by some to be like any other program offered for offenders, in which participants took the program to address their own needs, but did not serve any role among the offender population following completion of the course. These perceptions may have some basis in fact, since one of the PST members indicated that she was taking the program to address her own issues and needs. However, she did not feel that she had the necessary time or personal resources to provide support services to others.

Recommendations based on a pilot study of the PST program at Edmonton Institution (Blanchette & Eljdupovic-Guzina, 1998) might also be applicable to the implementation of the program at Nova. Blanchette and Eljdupovic-Guzina (1998) recommended that the focus of PST training be shifted from counseling to self-care. A two-tier process was suggested, in which the first step is training and graduation for anyone who might benefit from the training process itself. The second step would involve granting official PST membership to those individuals who possessed the necessary skills and desire to provide counseling services to their peers.

This strategy may be particularly relevant at Nova Institution given the fact the offender population is small and many offenders are serving short sentences. Thus, it may be possible to select several offenders who might be appropriate to become "official PST members" and who will also be remaining at the institution for long enough to provide support services to their peers. Moreover, several positive gains have been experienced by offenders who participated in PST training regardless of whether they became peer support providers or not. Thus, participation in training and graduation from the program might also be beneficial to: 1) those individuals who are serving short sentences and are therefore unable to provide PST services for any length of time; and 2) women who do not possess the necessary skills or confidence to provide support services to their peers, but are interested in addressing some of their own needs through participation in the training. Some modifications to the screening criteria might be

necessary in order to facilitate this two-tiered process, however (i.e., separate screening criteria for "PST graduates" versus "official PST members").

As the women at Nova begin to use PST services to a greater extent, it will also be necessary to facilitate regular communication between PST members and staff who are able to provide them with advice and support. This might be accomplished through the maintenance of records regarding support services provided and regular meetings with the coordinator.

Results also indicate that plans were being made to increase awareness of the PST program at the facility, in the form of posters and brochures. Distribution of information in this manner may be particularly beneficial for offenders, especially those who are new to the institution and likely have few contacts within the offender population. It seems likely, however, that some additional education may be necessary for staff members.

Results seem to indicate that initial attempts to inform staff about the program have not been entirely successful. Employees need more information regarding the identities of team members, distinction between roles of graduated PST members and PST members-in-training, and procedures involved in PST referrals. It may be necessary to have a mandatory meeting for staff regarding these issues, perhaps just before or after a shift-change when all staff members could attend. Implementation of a standing order defining the objectives of the program and the processes involved in referring offenders for peer support might also aid in awareness and convey more legitimacy to the program.

There was also some confusion regarding the administration and structure of the program, since it was organized differently from other programs at the institution. Several staff members were interested in receiving more information regarding the criteria used to screen potential PST members, as well as the outcome of training sessions (e.g., skills learned, capabilities of individual team members). Some individuals expressed an interest in contributing to the selection of women to participate in future training sessions. This could be accomplished either by including a staff member on the screening committee, or by soliciting referrals

from primary workers and other front-line staff who have frequent and direct contact with offenders.

The latter method could provide a large group of potential candidates for the program that might vary in terms of personal characteristics and be part of different social networks within the institution. In fact, information could be provided to staff members regarding the two-tiered process of selecting offenders for training (i.e., "official PST membership" versus "graduation from PST training"). Given this information, staff members could refer, not only offenders who they think might possess the necessary skills to provide support services to their peers, but also those individuals who might simply benefit personally from the program. Coordinators could then conduct individual interviews to determine which of these women were appropriate for the program.

Finally, several staff members requested more information regarding the outcome of training sessions (i.e., skills learned, goals achieved, attendance, participation, and evaluation of individual progress in the program). Results of interviews indicate that PST members are formally evaluated at the completion of PST training (see Appendix G). The process is based on assessments from several sources (i.e., PST members rate themselves, PST members rate other trainees, and coordinators rate PST members' progress)[15]. Several areas of functioning are evaluated including: performance during training, degree to which the training helped to address various criminogenic needs, as well as general perceptions of the benefits and limitations of the program. Evaluations from different sources are then summarized and PST members are provided with individual feedback regarding their performance.

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[15] All three sources contributed to the evaluations of the first two groups of PST trainees. However, the third group of trainees decided that they did not want to complete the evaluations themselves, since they did not want to be in a position to "judge" one another. Thus, evaluations for the third group of PST members were completed by the coordinators only.

This evaluation is fairly comprehensive. Most importantly, PST trainees are provided with feedback that allows them to assess their relative strengths and weaknesses, so that they might be cognizant of these factors when providing support to others. Given the fact that these evaluations are already completed, it might be beneficial to record a brief summary of individual program performance in offender's official files so that staff might have access to them. This information might be useful for two reasons. First, several staff members indicated that they might feel more confidant referring other offenders to PST members for support, if they were aware of their performance during training and the skills that had been learned.

Second, more formal information regarding participation in the PST program and skills learned during training might result in increased opportunity for discretionary release. Some staff members suggested that the individuals who participated in PST training had put a lot of effort into the program and gained much from the experience. It was perceived that this hard work should be recognized more formally. For example, information regarding their performance in the program would likely be perceived quite positively when determining release opportunities such as parole, or changes in security classification within the institution. Thus, more formal knowledge regarding participation and progress in the program might be beneficial in giving the PST program more legitimacy in these areas.

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APPENDIX A:

Rosenberg's self-esteem scale

Instructions:

Please indicate your degree of agreement with each of the following statements by circling the appropriate option for each statement.

S = Strongly Agree
A = Agree
D = Disagree
SD = Strongly Disagree

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

   SA A D SD

2. At times I think I am no good at all.

   SA A D SD

3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

   SA A D SD

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

   SA A D SD

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

   SA A D SD

6. I certainly feel useless at times.

   SA A D SD

7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

   SA A D SD

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

   SA A D SD

9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

   SA A D SD

10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

    SA A D SD

APPENDIX B:

Sociometric Test

We would like a better understanding of the relationships between women at the facility. For that reason, it would be of great help if you would provide answers to the following question. **Your responses are entirely confidential!**

Name _____ Date _____

Who do you go to for moral support?
Please indicate first and last names, if possible.

First choice: _____

Second choice: _____

Third choice: _____

APPENDIX C:

Correctional Environment Status Inventory

Facility:_____ Date(dd/mm/yy): ____ / ____ / ____

This questionnaire is being sent to you as part of the routine evaluation of this facility. It contains statements about your unit, the correctional staff at this facility and about you. Please take the time to complete the questionnaire. There is no need to write your name on the questionnaire. This will ensure that the results are confidential.

Once you have finished, place the completed questionnaire in the envelope, which is enclosed, and seal the envelope. Then give it to staff to return. Please take no longer than 5 days to return the package.

(A) Are you: (circle 1 or 2)

1 male
2 female

(B) How old are you?_____

(C) Are you an Aboriginal person? (circle 1 or 2)

1 yes
1 no

(D) How long is your current jail sentence? (circle 1 or 2)

1 2 years to 4 years
2 four years or more

(E) Have you been in jail before? (circle 1 or 2)

1 yes
2 no

On the next page, there are statements which describe the kinds of things that might go on in your facility and other statements which describe the way you may be feeling or thinking. Each statement is followed by the numbers 1 to 5. As you read each statement, circle a number from 1 to 5.

Circle **'1'** if what the statement describes <u>never</u> happens
Circle **'2'** if it happens <u>once in a while</u>
Circle **'3'** if it happens <u>often</u>
Circle **'4'** if it happens <u>most of the time</u>
Circle **'5'** if it <u>always</u> happens

Do not circle a number if you are not sure about what the statement means or if it is not applicable to your facility. Do not circle more than one number for a statement. Please note also that "correctional staff" refers to mainly to Primary Workers, though may also include Team Leaders, Mental Health personnel, and Management.

1=NEVER 2=ONCE IN A WHILE 3=OFTEN 4=MOST OF THE TIME 5=ALWAYS

1.	Correctional staff ignore me.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Correctional staff take into consideration residents' explanations for things that happen at the facility.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Correctional staff keep residents waiting for appointments.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Correctional staff act on residents' suggestions.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Correctional staff apologize to residents when they have made a mistake.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	When correctional staff disagree with each other, they work it out.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	If I am being treated unfairly by a primary worker, I get a fair hearing.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Correctional staff change their minds about what we should be doing.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Correctional staff help residents to resolve arguments.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	When a resident's programme is changed, a primary worker explains why.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Correctional staff encourage me to try new ways of doing things.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	Correctional staff and residents say how they feel about each other.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	Before correctional staff give out a ticket, they try to find out what happened.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	The more mature residents at the facility help take care of the less mature ones.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	Facility meetings start on time.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	Correctional staff let me know when they think I've done something really good.	1	2	3	4	5
17.	Correctional staff pay attention to residents.	1	2	3	4	5
18.	Correctional staff get along well with each other.	1	2	3	4	5
19.	Some residents are very insulting to others at this facility.	1	2	3	4	5
20.	I speak to correctional staff respectfully.	1	2	3	4	5
21.	On this facility it is OK to speak your mind.	1	2	3	4	5
22.	It is OK for residents to disagree openly with primary workers.	1	2	3	4	5
23.	Correctional staff agree on what kinds of behaviours are acceptable.	1	2	3	4	5
24.	I feel comfortable telling correctional staff how I feel.	1	2	3	4	5
25.	I hide my real feelings from other residents.	1	2	3	4	5
26.	Residents at the facility call each other names.	1	2	3	4	5
27.	I like having correctional staff participate in our activities.	1	2	3	4	5
28.	I feel safe in confronting other residents who are doing something they shouldn't be doing.	1	2	3	4	5
29.	I try to help other residents on my facility to work out their problems.	1	2	3	4	5
30.	When residents get into trouble, it's pretty clear why.	1	2	3	4	5
31.	Correctional staff work as a team.	1	2	3	4	5
32.	This is a very well organized facility.	1	2	3	4	5
33.	If a resident doesn't want to shower regularly, the other residents on the facility deal with it.	1	2	3	4	5
34.	Correctional staff help me to deal with my anger in a better way.	1	2	3	4	5
35.	Correctional staff encourage residents to think about their goals.	1	2	3	4	5
36.	This is a clean facility.	1	2	3	4	5

The next set of questions asks you to show how much you agree with each statement. Again, circle a number from 1 to 5. Once again, "correctional staff" refers to mainly to Primary Workers, though may also include Team Leaders, Mental Health personnel, and Management.

1=COMPLETELY DISAGREE **2**=DISAGREE A BIT **3**=AGREE A BIT **4**=MOSTLY AGREE
5=COMPLETELY AGREE

37.	Residents are expected to share their personal problems with each other.	1	2	3	4	5
38.	Correctional staff here are trying to help me.	1	2	3	4	5
39.	I am trying to improve and get better.	1	2	3	4	5
40.	The other residents at this facility help me to understand myself.	1	2	3	4	5
41.	I know what my next steps will be when I am released.	1	2	3	4	5
42.	Correctional staff are interested in how I am doing.	1	2	3	4	5
43.	Getting into treatment programs is important to me.	1	2	3	4	5
44.	I respect the correctional staff.	1	2	3	4	5
45.	Correctional staff care about me.	1	2	3	4	5
46.	Residents know what jobs need to be done and when they need to get them done.	1	2	3	4	5
47.	Correctional staff help me to feel that I can stay out of jail in the future.	1	2	3	4	5
48.	Correctional staff prefer to stay in their offices rather than spend time with residents.	1	2	3	4	5
49.	Rules at this facility are clear.	1	2	3	4	5
50.	I am solving the problems that got me in here.	1	2	3	4	5
51.	I know what kinds of behaviour will get me into trouble.	1	2	3	4	5
52.	I want to change the way I am.	1	2	3	4	5
53.	Correctional staff would like to know how I'm doing once I have been released.	1	2	3	4	5
54.	I am learning better ways of solving my problems.	1	2	3	4	5
55.	Residents are encouraged to plan for the future.	1	2	3	4	5
56.	The other residents at the facility have nothing to offer me.	1	2	3	4	5
57.	I care about what happens to the other residents.	1	2	3	4	5
58.	I have a really good sense of what I should and shouldn't do around here.	1	2	3	4	5
59.	When I arrived, the other residents helped me to learn how things work around here.	1	2	3	4	5
60.	Correctional staff are more interested in their pay checks than in me.	1	2	3	4	5
61.	Correctional staff think that only residents are responsible for problems at the facility.	1	2	3	4	5
62.	My case manager is interested in how I am doing.	1	2	3	4	5
63.	I like most of the residents at this facility.	1	2	3	4	5
64.	At this facility, every resident is out for herself.	1	2	3	4	5
65.	I will have to solve my problems if I want to stay out of jail.	1	2	3	4	5
66.	Correctional staff help me to feel that I can manage my life better than I have in the past.	1	2	3	4	5

Please check your questionnaire to make sure that you have not overlooked any statements. On the reverse side of this page, feel free to make note of any important aspects of the prison environment that this questionnaire did not cover.

APPENDIX D:

Items in CESI Scales and Subscales

Scale: Staff Involvement

Subscale: Responsive Staff

Correctional staff take into consideration resident's explanations for things that happen at the facility

Correctional staff act on resident's suggestions

Correctional staff apologize to residents when they have made a mistake

If I am being treated unfairly by a correctional officer, I get a fair hearing

When a resident's program is changed, a correctional officer explains why

Before correctional staff give out a ticket, they try to find out what happened

Subscale: Caring Staff

Correctional staff are interested in how I am doing

Correctional staff care about me

Correctional staff would like to know how I'm doing once I have been released

My case manager is interested in how I am doing

Subscale: Disinterested Staff

Correctional staff keep residents waiting for appointments

Correctional staff prefer to stay in their offices rather than spend time with residents

Correctional staff ignore me

Correctional staff are more interested in their pay checks than in me

Correctional staff think that only residents are responsible for problems on the facility

Scale: Staff Treatment Focus

Subscale: Encouragement

Correctional staff pay attention to residents

Correctional staff help me to deal with my anger in a better way

Correctional staff encourage residents to think about their goals

Correctional staff are trying to help me

Correctional staff help me feel that I can stay out of trouble

Residents are encouraged to plan for the future

Correctional staff help me to feel that I can manage my life better than I have in the past

Subscale: Open Communication

Correctional staff help residents to resolve arguments

Correctional staff encourage me to try new ways of doing things

Correctional staff and residents say how they feel about each other

Correctional staff let me know when they think I've done something good

It is OK for residents to disagree openly with correctional officers

I feel comfortable telling correctional staff how I feel

Scale: Staff Cohesion

When correctional staff disagree with each other, they work it out

Correctional staff get along well with each other

I speak to correctional staff respectfully

Correctional staff agree on what kinds of behaviours are acceptable

I like having correctional staff participate in our activities

Correctional staff work as a team

I respect the correctional staff

Scale: Clarity & Organization

Rules at this facility are clear

Facility meetings start on time

When residents get into trouble, it's pretty clear why

I have a really good sense of what I should and shouldn't do around here

Correctional staff change their minds about what we should be doing

This is a clean facility

Residents know what jobs need to be done and when they need to get them done

This is a very well organized facility

Scale: Offender Treatment Orientation

Subscale: Problem Solving

I am solving the problems that got me in here

I know what kinds of behaviours will get me into trouble

I am learning better ways of solving my problems

I will have to solve my problems if I want to stay out of jail

I want to change the way I am

Subscale: Change Orientation

On this facility it is OK to speak your mind

I am trying to improve and get better

I know what my next steps will be when I am released

Getting into treatment programs is important to me

Residents are expected to share their personal problems with each other

Scale: Offender Relationships

Subscale: Mutual Caring

Correctional staff get along well with each other

The other residents on this facility help me to understand myself

The other residents on the facility have nothing to offer me

I care about what happens to the other residents

When I arrived, the other residents helped me learn how things work around here

I like most of the residents on this facility

At this facility, every resident is out for herself

Subscale: Peer Support

The more mature residents on the facility help take care of the less mature ones

I feel safe in confronting other residents who are doing something they shouldn't be doing

I try to help other residents on my facility to work out their problems

If a resident doesn't want to shower regularly, the other residents on the facility deal with it

Subscale: Hostility

Some residents are very insulting to others on the facility

I hide my real feelings from other residents

Residents at this facility call each other names

APPENDIX E:

Survey Formats

OFFENDER SURVEY

The Peer Support Team (PST) is a peer counseling service for all women in this facility. PST volunteers are trained in peer counseling and crisis intervention counseling. If you are feeling depressed, angry, suicidal, or upset the PST may be able to help. The counseling is entirely confidential.

In order to understand how this process is going and to find ways to make it even better, we would appreciate if you would fill out this questionnaire and tell us how you feel about Peer Support.

Your responses will be kept entirely confidential and your anonymity is guaranteed.

1. How old are you? _____
2. How long is your current sentence? _____
3. How long have you been incarcerated? _____
4. How long have you been at this facility? _____
5. Were you aware of PST Program and the possibility to receive support and counseling from your peers (PST member)?
   _____ Yes _____ No
6. If yes, how did you find out about it?
   _____ saw notices, postings
   _____ another offender told you
   _____ you were approached by the Team member who explained the program to you
   _____ other *(specify)*_____
7. Do you know who the Team members are?
   _____ Yes _____ No
8. Do you know how to submit a request for counseling?
   _____ Yes _____ No

9. How many times have you asked to see a PST member?
   _____ Never
   _____ Once
   _____ 2 -5 times
   _____ More than 5 times

10. If you have **NOT** asked to see a PST member, is it because:
   _____ You did not know about PST?
   _____ You haven't needed to?
   _____ You do not feel comfortable with anyone on the PST?
   _____ You are worried about confidentiality?
   _____ You are worried what other people might think?
   _____ You are a PST member
   _____ Other reason *(specify)*_____
_____

11. Have you ever asked to see a PST member and been told that you could not see one?
   _____ Yes _____ No

12. Is there anything that would make you feel more comfortable to ask to see a PST member? *(If yes, please specify)*
_____

13. If you **HAVE ASKED** for peer counseling, was your request *(check both if appropriate):*

_____ Formal (you approached PST member or staff and a meeting was organized)

_____ Informal (you and the PST member got together and talked during your free time without any specific arrangements being made)

14. Why did you ask for peer counseling? *(please check all that apply)*
   ___ psychologist or other professional staff was not available
   ___ argument with staff
   ___ argument with another offender
   ___ you felt like injuring yourself
   ___ depressed
   ___ you felt suicidal
   ___ you were upset/angry
   ___ you felt very lonely
   ___ other *(specify)* _____
   _____

15. How helpful was the peer counseling?
(please circle one number)

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
Not helpful at all — Somewhat helpful — Very helpful

16. Did peer counseling fulfill your expectations?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
Not at all — Somewhat — Entirely

17. If yes, in what way?

_____

_____

18. If no, why not?

_____

_____

19. How satisfied were you with promptness of the counseling being organized for you upon your request?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
Not at all — Somewhat — Entirely

20. How long did you have to wait for staff to get you in touch with PST member?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
Not long — Very long

21. How long did you have to wait for the counselor to respond to your request?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
Not long — Very long

22. Were you 'excused' from other duties in order to be able to receive peer counseling?
___ Yes ___ No

23. If Peer Support counseling **did not help**, could you please tell us why?

_____

_____

24. Have you noticed any changes in the general atmosphere on the facility, or the relationship between staff and offenders and amongst offenders due to the PST Program?

_____ No

_____ Yes What kind?

_____

_____

25. Do you believe that peer counseling (or the Peer Support Program) is ever used for other purposes (e.g., to chat, to avoid work, and so on)?

_____ No

_____ Yes

How?_____

_____

26. Do you feel that you have gained a better understanding of women's issues through the PST Program? *(If yes, please explain)*

_____ No

_____ Yes- How?_____

If you **have received** peer counseling, would you be willing to talk more about it with the researcher? If yes, please write your name and we will contact you. We would like to assure you that our conversation will be entirely confidential.

_____

Yes, I am willing to talk about my experiences with peer counseling.

Name _____ **Date** _____

SURVEY FOR STAFF

This questionnaire is designed to determine the effectiveness of the Peer Support Team program at your facility. As you know, this program represents a peer counseling service for all women offenders which is provided by trained offenders. PST volunteers are trained in peer counseling and crisis intervention counseling. If an offender is feeling depressed, angry, suicidal, or upset, she may require the help of the PST member, or the PST member may provide help by being there with the woman in distress, without her formally requesting counseling.

We would appreciate if you would respond to the following questions. Your perceptions and feelings about this program are of great importance for its evaluation. The questionnaire is anonymous, and your responses will be kept entirely confidential.

We would also like to talk to you about this program, since we believe that an interview can provide better understanding of your own personal opinions about this program. If you are willing to volunteer for an interview, please indicate so at the bottom of this questionnaire.

1. How did you find out about the PST Program?

   _____ Psychologist told you

   _____ Saw postings

   _____ Other *(explain)* _____

   _____ I was not aware of it

2. Do you know who Team members are?

   _____ Yes _____ No

3. Do you know how to proceed when an offender requests peer counseling?

_____ No

_____ YesHow? _____

4. How effective do you find PST Program to be in crisis intervention:

a) With problems of individual offenders?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
Not helpful at all — Somewhat helpful — Very helpful

b) In terms of preventing or assisting in the case of institutional crisis?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
Not helpful at all — Somewhat helpful — Very helpful

5. Have you noticed any changes in the general atmosphere on the facility, relationship between staff and offenders and amongst offenders due to the PST Program?

_____ No

_____ Yes What kind? _____

6. Please indicate the level of trust you have for PST members?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
No trust — Complete trust

Does it vary for different Team members?
_____ Yes _____ No

7. Have you noticed any changes in PST members since their involvement in the Program (how they deal with their personal issues, incarceration; their role in the offender group; their relationship and behaviour towards the staff)?
_____ No

_____ Yes In what way? _____

_____

8. Do you think that PST Program reinforces the positive effects of other programs:

a) For Team members?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
not at all a great deal

b) For all offenders?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
not at all a great deal

9. Did peer counseling ever create a crisis or a problem that was greater than the original one? *(If yes, please explain)*

_____ No

_____ Yes Why and when? _____

_____

10. Do you feel that counseling sessions are sometimes used by women for other purposes? *(If yes, please explain)*

_____ No
_____ Yes How? _____

_____

Please answer the following questions if you feel comfortable to do so, otherwise, please feel free to skip them.

What is your position at this facility? _____

How long have you been in this position? _____

How long have you been working with women offenders? _____

Would you be willing to have an interview with us regarding this program? The duration of the interview is 20-40 min.

Yes Name_____

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION!

APPENDIX F:

Guidelines for Semi-Structured Interviews

GUIDE FOR INTERVIEW WITH THE PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Description of the PST Program modality

Please describe the Peer Support Team Program and/or related activities at your facility?

If different from the one described in the Manual for PST Program:

Please describe the rationale for establishing the program/activities in this particular way?

What are the goals and aims of the peer support notion and related activities at your facility?

Establishing the PST Program

i) Support

Do you feel that the PST Program is considered important by the following staff at the facility?

Mental health professionals

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

Not important at all — Somewhat important — Very important

Primary workers

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

Not important at all — Somewhat important — Very important

Warden

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

Not important at all — Somewhat important — Very important

Have you noticed any resistance to the PST Program, either by inmates or staff?

Are the amount of time and energy you put into PST Program acknowledged as part of your regular job?

How is the funding of the program organized?

What would you find helpful for running the program, is there anything that you would need more of, or less of?

ii) Features of the Program

How long can an individual be a PST member for?

How many PST members are in a course at a time?

Last time?

How many of those graduated?

How is it decided who graduates? (Who decides?)

Is there an initial screening of potential PST members before the interview?

If so, what screening criteria are used?

Who does the screening?

Is there a standing order for the PST?

iii) Training

How helpful do you find the training?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10		
Not helpful at all	Somewhat helpful	Very helpful

Do you feel that you covered enough topics during the training?

Was the time devoted to them sufficient?

How useful do you find the Manual for the PST members?

iv) Balancing PST activities of Team members with other activities at the facility

Are members attending the training sessions supported (e.g. is peer support acknowledged as regular work)?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
Not at all Somewhat Entirely

Were other staff members expecting them to be somewhere else or to be engage in some other activity?

Was there a graduation ceremony?

Who was invited, and how did the Team members feel about it?

To what extent do you feel that the process from inmate's request for counseling to receiving it, is going smoothly?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
Not at all Somewhat Entirely

How do you perceive Primary Workers' responsiveness to inmate's requests?

How do you perceive PST members' responsiveness/promptness?

Implementation

i) Relationships

How do you feel about the idea of peers, (i.e. inmates) helping each other?

How would you assess the quality of relationship and the established trust between you and PST members?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
poor moderate very good

How would you assess the quality of relationship and the established trust between PST members and the following staff?

Primary workers 1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
poor moderate very good

Mental health professionals 1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
poor moderate very good

How would you assess the quality of relationship and the established trust amongst Team members?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
poor moderate very good

How would you assess other meetings and other staff's involvement in the Program?

Have you noticed any changes in the general atmosphere at the facility, relationship between staff and inmates and amongst inmates due to the PST Program?

Have you ever had to deal with policy violations by Team members, complaints by 'recipients' of peer counseling? If so, how did you deal with them?

Effectiveness of the Program

i) Crisis Intervention

How effective do you find PST Program to be in crisis intervention?

a) For individual inmates?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
Not helpful at all Somewhat helpful Very helpful

b) In terms of preventing or assisting institutional crises?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
Not helpful at all Somewhat helpful Very helpful

ii) Changes in Team members

Have you noticed any changes in PST members since their involvement in the Program?

How they deal with their personal issues, incarceration, etc.?

What is their role in the inmate group, their relationship and behavior towards the staff?

Unintended effects

Do you think that PST Program reinforces effects of other programs or has other long term positive effects, in the case of Team members and/or all inmates?

Do Team members have a tendency to counsel too much? Are there any mechanisms in place to safeguard against burn-out? Are there any regulations in case of breach of confidentiality?

Do you see a possibility that peer counseling can create an opposite effect and actually increase the crisis in some situations?

Do Team members tend to develop some form of 'elitism' due to their status in the group?

As a Coordinator did you encounter any challenges in balancing the facilitation of the Program and having to step in and take over the process in some situations?

GUIDE FOR THE INTERVIEW WITH PEER SUPPORT TEAM MEMBERS

Establishing the PST Program

i) Training

How helpful did you find the PST training?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
Not helpful at all — Somewhat helpful — Very helpful

Do you feel that you covered enough topics during the training?
Was the time devoted to them sufficient?

How useful do you find the Manual for the PST members?

ii) Balancing PST duties with other activities at the facility

Was your attendance of the training sessions supported?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
not at all — somewhat — entirely

Were staff members expecting you to be somewhere else or to be engage in some other activity?

Was there a graduation ceremony? Who was invited? How did you feel about it?

How easy do you find it to fit counseling with your other duties and work?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
very hard — very easy

How satisfied are you with assistance you are getting for fitting in your counseling with other duties and work you are expected to perform?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
not at all — very satisfied

If you counseled during the working hours were you paid for that time?

If you counseled during the night, were you able to take equivalent amount of time off work the following day?

Did you receive enough support, help, financial assistance for events that your Team is organizing or planing?

Have you noticed any resistance to the PST Program either by staff or inmates?

Implementation

i) Meeting the inmates' needs

What types of requests for counseling do you receive (formal, informal, other)?

How often do you find yourself 'informally' counseling another woman (i.e., no 'formal' request for peer support was submitted)?.

Have you ever used the PST?

If not, why not?

If you needed to, would you?

ii) Relationships

How do you feel about the idea of peers, (i.e., inmates) helping each other?

How satisfied are you with the availability of the Coordinator to have consultations with you when you need them?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
not at all very satisfied

How would you describe Coordinator's relationship with you?

How satisfied are you with support and relationships with other Team members and what you are getting from the Team meetings?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
not at all very satisfied

How would you assess the quality of relationship and the established trust between you and other PST members?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
poor moderate very good

How would you assess the quality of relationship and the established trust between PST members and the following staff?

Primary workers 1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
poor moderate very good

Mental health professionals 1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
poor moderate very good

How do you feel about other meetings regarding the PST Program (e.g., Steering Committee)?

Effectiveness of the Program and Unintended effects

Did you change in any way as a result of being a PST member (for example, how you deal with your personal issues, incarceration)?

Did your role in the inmate group change?

Did your relationship and behavior towards institutional staff change?

Do you feel that you are in charge of the Program, or rather, that you are being directed to a great extent by the Coordinator and/or other staff?

GUIDE FOR INTERVIEWS WITH STAFF

1) Please tell us what is your perception of the Peer Support Team program?

2) How do you feel about peers (i.e., inmates) supporting each other?

2) Do you see any benefits or hindrances of having this program at your facility for Team members, recipients and staff?

4) How do you perceive its effect on the relationship among inmates; inmates and staff?

5) Does it affect the atmosphere at the facility in any way?

6) Do you believe that the Peer Support program is ever used inappropriately (i.e., for alternate purposes, such as socializing, to evade work or other programs, etc.)?

7) Can you suggest any improvements to the PST program?

GUIDE FOR INTERVIEWS WITH RECIPIENTS

1) Would you please tell me about your experience with Peer counseling was like?

2) If you feel comfortable doing so, can you explain why you requested peer support? What did the PST member suggest?

3) Did you find it helpful and if yes, why and in what way?

4) Is there anything you particularly liked or disliked about counseling?

5) Are there any changes in this process that you would recommend?

6) How do you feel about the very notion of peers, (i.e., inmates) supporting each other?

GUIDE FOR INTERVIEW WITH THOSE WHO DO NOT KNOW ABOUT PEER SUPPORT

If interviewee DOESN'T know about PST:

The Peer Support Team (PST) is a peer counseling service for all women in this facility. PST volunteers are trained in peer counseling and crisis intervention counseling. If you are feeling depressed, angry, lonely, or upset the PST may be able to help. The counseling is entirely confidential.

1) Do you think this program is a good idea?
   Why or why not?

2) Would you like to be a member?
   Why or why not?

3) Do you think you would ever use peer support?
   Why or why not?

4) What do you think would be a good way to inform everyone about peer support?

GUIDE FOR INTERVIEW WITH THOSE WHO HAVE NEVER RECEIVED PEER COUNSELLING

1) Why have you never used peer counseling?

2) Would you ever use peer counseling in the future? Why or why not?

3) What are some benefits of peer counseling?

4) What are some disadvantages of peer counseling?

GUIDE FOR INTERVIEW WITH THOSE WHO WANTED TO BE PST MEMBERS BUT WERE **NOT ACCEPTED** FOR PST TRAINING & THOSE WHO **DID NOT GRADUATE** FROM PST TRAINING

1) Why did you want to be a PST member?

2) How did you feel about not getting accepted as a PST member (or not graduating from PST training)?
   OR Why do you think you were not accepted to be a PST member?
   OR What were you told was the reason you were not accepted as a PST member?

3) How do you feel about others who are or are becoming PST members?

4) Have you used PST in the past?

   Why or why not?

5) Would you use PST in the future?

   Why or why not?

INTERVIEW WITH THOSE IN PST TRAINING

1) How did you find out about becoming a PST member?

2) What made you interested in becoming a PST member?

3) Did you ever receive PST counseling?

4) What made you feel volunteering for PST was right for you?
Or /And – What made feel you were right for volunteering for PST?

5) What do you think your role as a PST member will be?

6) What do you predict are/will be some of the *benefits* associated with your involvement in PST?

7) What do you predict are/will be some of the *problems* associated with your involvement in PST?

8) How far are you in your training?

Lesson # _

9) What do you hope to accomplish/learn from training?

10) How would you rate the training up until now?

Poor 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Exceptional

Comments:

APPENDIX G:

Peer Support Program Evaluation Form

Name:
Date:

This evaluation is divided into 3 parts. Part I asks you to evaluate this group of Peer Support Trainees including yourself. Part II asks you to evaluate how the Peer Support Program has helped you address your criminogenic factors. Part III asks you to evaluate the Peer Support Program in general.

PART I[16]

Please consider the person who is named at the top of each set of questions and circle your rating of this person's performance in the following areas:

Name:

1) Participation in group discussion and exercises:

1	2	3	4	5
poor	limited	good	very good	excellent

2) Familiarity with the material (i.e., comes prepared to group meetings, has read or thought about the material, etc.):

1	2	3	4	5
poor	limited	good	very good	excellent

3) Attendance:

1	2	3	4	5
poor	limited	good	very good	excellent

4) Understanding of the concepts presented in the program:

1	2	3	4	5
poor	limited	good	very good	excellent

[16] For Part I of the evaluation offenders were asked to rate the performance of each of the peer support trainees, including themselves. In addition, program coordinators also rated trainees' performance in these areas. At the end of the training PST trainees were presented with a summary of their accomplishments based on an averaged score of all the ratings (self-ratings, ratings of other trainees, and coordinator's ratings).

5) How likely would it be that you would request to see this woman if you needed support (do not rate yourself)?

1 - not at all
2 - only if no one else was available
3 - maybe
4 - likely
5 - very likely

6) Please list this person's relative strengths:

7) Please list this person's relative weaknesses:

PART II

Your name:

Please answer this question as it pertains to **YOU** only:

How has this program helped you address the following criminogenic needs:

a) Attitude:

1	2	3	4	5	
not at all	a little	a fair amount	much	very much	N/A

b) Personal/emotional orientation:

1	2	3	4	5	
not at all	a little	a fair amount	much	very much	N/A

c) Community functioning:

1	2	3	4	5	
not at all	a little	a fair amount	much	very much	N/A

d) Substance Abuse:

1	2	3	4	5	
not at all	a little	a fair amount	much	very much	N/A

e) Associates/social interactions:

1	2	3	4	5	
not at all	a little	a fair amount	much	very much	N/A

f) Marital/family:

1	2	3	4	5	
not at all	a little	a fair amount	much	very much	N/A

g) Employment/education:

1	2	3	4	5	
not at all	a little	a fair amount	much	very much	N/A

Additional Comments:

PART III

We would appreciate your feedback about the Peer Support Program. Please answer the following questions:

1) What did you like best about the program?

2) What did you dislike about the program?

3) How could this program be improved?